

***UNCOMMON WOMEN AND OTHERS AND THE STORY
TOLD WITHOUT WORDS***

Honors Thesis

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Bachelor of Fine Arts in Theatre Design**

In the School of Arts and Sciences
at Salem State University

By

Rachel Rose Burke

Professor Michael M. Harvey
Faculty Advisor
Department of Theatre and Speech Communication

Commonwealth Honors Program
Salem State University
2019

Abstract

This project is a documentation of the scenic design process for the Salem State University production of *Uncommon Women and Others* by Wendy Wasserstein. The production ran between February 14th and February 24th, 2019 in the Callan Studio Theater at Salem State University and was directed by Brianne Beatrice, with assistance from Allyson Kinch. The director's concept was to force focus on the dialogue within the play by creating a sense of realism and comfort in the environment. This would emphasize the realistic nature of the strong female characters as they attempt to plan their lifelong goals upon their graduation from Mount Holyoke. As the play takes place in the late 1970s as well as the flash-forwards in the early 1980s, the females of the time feel obligated to break their gender norms and become the "uncommon women" who excel in both their education and career choices. The audience watches intimately as they not only attempt to figure out their goals, but as they begin to figure out themselves as empowered individuals. This thesis project will demonstrate step-by-step how I achieved an effective design for this production, as well as exhibit the impact that the scenic environment of a production has on the overall experience of both the audience and the performers.

Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Table of Contents	ii
Acknowledgements	iv
Introduction	1
Pre-Design	
Concept Meeting	3
Research	5
Inspirations	9
Design	
“Starter Thoughts”	12
Initial Sketches	13
Building the Design Packet	17
The Design Packet	19
The 3D Model	23
Design Execution	
Budgeting	26
Production Meetings	32
Designer Presentations	34
Props- Swatching & Pulling	35
Building Process	37
Painting Process	38
Designer Concept Statement	39
Result	
KCACTF Respondent	41
Pre-Show Discussion	42
Reviews	44
Interviews	46
In Conclusion	50

Appendices

Imagery Index	52
<i>Uncommon Women and Others</i> by Wendy Wasserstein	53
Interview Manuscripts	81
Works Cited	95

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the entire cast, crew and production team of *Uncommon Women and Others* for all of their dedication and creativity. You are the ones who make my career path not feel like a job, but rather a mere passion, which I enjoy.

I would like to thank Michael Harvey for being not only my faculty advisor throughout this process, but for mentoring me throughout my entire undergraduate career and guiding my way to get to where I am now. I am forever grateful for everything you have done for me; I couldn't have done it without you.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my family and friends for all of their love, kindness, and support over the past many years. I am truly blessed to have all of you in my life.

Introduction

In the Spring of 2018, I was appointed the task of designing the scenery for the Spring of 2019 production of *Uncommon Women and Others* by Wendy Wasserstein (Wasserstein, *Uncommon Women and Others*). It was to be directed by Brianne Beatrice, a graduate of the Salem State University Theatre program, who also acted as a current adjunct professor within the department. The entire assigned production team is listed below.

Director: Brianne Beatrice

Assistant Director: Allyson Kinch

Stage Manager: Jenna Glass

Assistant Stage Managers: Cassie Lebeau & MaryEllen Conway

Scenic Designer: Rachel Rose Burke

Technical Director: Stu Grieve

Assistant Technical Director: Katrina Tuck

Costume Designer: Jerry Johnson

Assistant Costume Designer: Lindsey Collins

Lighting Designer: Mathias Cardona

Sound Designer: Ethan Dunford

Props Master: Liam Conlon

Assistant Props Master: Abby Hopple

Wig, Hair, and Make-Up: Charlie August Kellogg

The assignment was to act as my senior capstone project, as a graduating senior from the program, as well as my focus for my Commonwealth Honors Thesis. I first read the script over the summer as a “joy read” to simply and clearly develop my own thoughts about the story. My first reaction to the script was that it felt abruptly relatable to my current position as someone who was also about to graduate from a university. All

of the characters within the play were female, and in their own individual processes of finding out who they were going to be in society once they left the comfort of their friends at Mount Holyoke. It was astonishingly similar how the mindsets were of the girls in the late 1970s compared to collegiate females today. Thoughts of career development versus settling down with a partner and family were and still are extremely prevalent and weighing on the early twenty-year-old woman. I knew from that first reading that I was in for a very personal and important process for my education, my career, my peers and myself.

Pre-Design

Concept Meeting

On October 26th the designers, the stage manager, and the directors gathered in the conference room to go over the director's concept and overall artistic vision of the play. We began by greeting each other and running briefly over all our positions as to remind each other who was responsible for what, and to introduce those who had not met.

Brianne began then by expressing how she wanted to keep the design elements within a realistic style as to support the audience's focus on the words in the script. She liked the idea of an intimate setting so that the audience could form a deeper connection with the characters; creating a stronger sense of trust and comfort throughout their experience. We were going to keep the setting and time period as implied in the script, since there were many scripted references to the time, and the overall themes and meanings in the play were still very relevant to today as they were written in the 1970s.

Jerry Johnson's costumes as well as Charlie Kellogg's designs for hair and make-up were to assist the actors in reflecting the silhouette and style that would have been seen in that era, while also emphasizing the personalities of those characters. The sound design, tended to by Ethan Dunford, would consist of music that wasn't necessarily created at the time, but rather the music that was popular to the age group of the women in those years. The set was to house the production, by providing an environment for all other elements to live within and around, making the whole piece make sense. It should resemble the architectural style of Mount Holyoke, imply the surroundings to be a university, and fit in the small black box theater that was the "Callan." The lighting design of Mathias Cardona would light the space and create the mood within the scenes,

and the properties, chosen and placed by Liam Conlon, would provide objects and furniture that the actors could interact with, and fill the space.

Research

Most of the research that I conduct as a scenic designer is based on imagery. While it is important to also have a good understanding of events that were happening at the time of the play, as well as period and geographic references, the design of the space is primarily formed from relative and inspired imagery.

Interestingly enough, one of the first things I do when I begin researching for a design is create a board on the famous app, Pinterest™. This method is extremely useful as Pinterest™ consists of all sorts of imagery from different periods of art, to step-by-step examples on “how to churn butter.”

Allyson Kinch, the assistant director, also helped my research process a great deal as she also acted as our dramaturge (dedicated person who researches the world in which a play was written). She shared all of her findings with the cast and production team in order to create a more cohesively educated team. One very helpful timeline (Mount Holyoke College) showed the entirety of Mount Holyoke’s history in comparison to world events, and provided the cast and production team with much important information. In 1961 it was written in the Mount Holyoke College handbook, that

“Although dressing up may be a nuisance at times, it is a quiet reminder that after all, we are all still feminine-a fact far too often obscured by Bermudas, sneakers, and shirt-tails.”

The same source also explains that in 1966 an organization called “NOW,” or the “National Organization for Women” was established in order “to take action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society.”

All of this is important in order to understand the world of the play in which one is designing the environment for. Understanding the formality of this time period, and the overarching idea that women are trying to break free from the comfort of their suppressed history was imperative to my design. Much of my image research is also depicted below.



Figure 1

Figure 1 (above) is probably my most influential research photo from Mount Holyoke College (MHC) that contributed to my design. As the primary location for the play was described as a college common room, where the girls often hung around discussing romantics and pop culture, I wanted to go for a comfortable atmosphere with “nooks” of sorts to provide the characters with different spaces and the ideal ability to wonder.

Specifically, I liked the magnificently arched windows throughout Mount Holyoke and the built-in bookcases in this room were especially interesting to me. I also enjoyed how there were separate areas with furniture and tables for students to spread out. Figure 2 (below) had a similar color scheme and a similar yet more distinguished arched window. In this photo I discovered that many of the main MHC common rooms had especially tall ceilings and intricately carved flying buttresses.

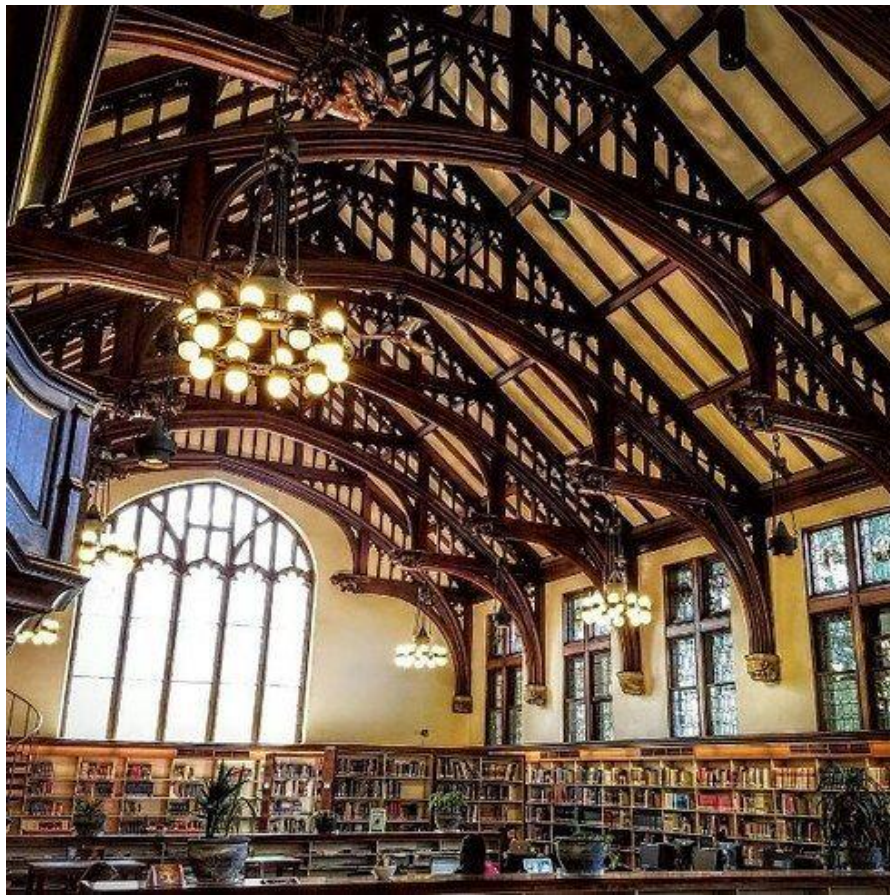


Figure 2



Figure 3

Figure 3 (above) shows a closer look at the window in figure 2. This image specifically influenced the idea for the window within my design. In order to slightly generalize the environment as to allow the audience's imagination to excel, I opted to have a simpler stained glass pattern contrary to the specified symbols above. I used the school colors of Mount Holyoke (red, yellow, green, blue and violet) but left them in a horizontal linear pattern to give off a sense of ease and relativity.

Inspirations

Inspirational images contrast with research images in the sense that they may not directly relate to the historical facts of the world of the play, however they may reflect an important theme or message that also resides in the script. Inspirations provide another way of seeing the environment that supports the ideas and the concept. Some of my inspirational images are shown below.



Figure 4

Figure 4 (above) portrays two college females “hanging out” in their dorm room. Their shoes are off, and they are simply enjoying each other’s company in the freedom of their own tiny space. A specific note on this photo is that they are indeed wearing pants, as if they are quietly contesting the gender norms of their time from their beds. This evokes an emotion that inspired me to take a “loungy” route with the scenery. I wanted to allow for the girls to spread and claim different aspects of the space that made them feel at ease.

Many times when looking for inspiration, I will come across quotes by historical (or even modern) figures that happen to speak volumes about what I am also trying to say as a designer. Figure 5 (below) features the oh-so-powerful Michelle Obama saying, “Success isn’t about how much money you make, it’s about the difference you make in people’s lives.” One of the struggles that the girls in the play are dealing with is what to do with their “newly found feminine pride” and how to use it to create a successful career. As this image pointed out however, maybe just being supportive towards your “women friends” can be enough to declare yourself an “uncommon woman.”

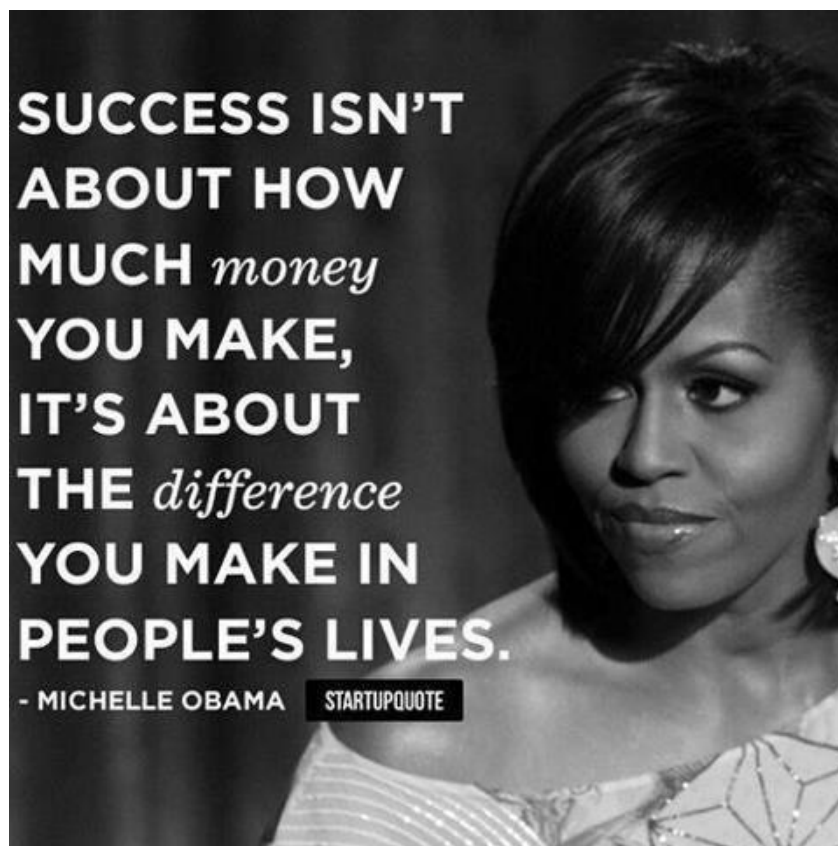


Figure 5

Another powerful female figure is the historically famous “Rosie the Riveter” (figure6). She is referenced several times in the script, mostly by the character, Muffet, as she craves to be a considered a “strong woman.” Muffet admits to enjoying to

companionship of men, and desperately wants to “find her prince” but she fears that those facts make her reliant on the male species, and not independent “like Rosie.” However in the end when she realizes how-since she hasn’t found her prince-she has been supporting herself, she truly is a strong and independent woman.



Figure 6

Design

“Starter Thoughts”

Based on all the information, research and inspirational images that I had gathered, I began to see the ideas in my head come together into a “sort of” cohesive picture. As the play starts, it is the early 1980s and the girls are reuniting after they had graduated six years prior. They begin to reflect back on their time at MHC, leading to the next scene-and the bulk of the play-where they are back in college and constantly together talking about “women things.” The set had to be able to signify the element of “going back” to a time that reflected youth, hope and wonder.

The main technical challenge was designing a set that could effectively act as both the early 1980s restaurant as well as the late 1970s college common room with as little and smooth changes as possible to create a “magical memory-like” transition. I decided that starting with a smaller acting area for the present to show the remaining intimacy despite the loss of imagination and exploration, and then opening up to the college with a wide implied hallway and elaborate window piece would essentially be the way for me to explore. The idea of a large frosted and stained glass window evokes a sense of future-wonder as well as self-reflection that I wanted to really express to the audience.

Initial Sketches



Figure 7

My first sketch drew out my ideas for an arched window and window seat that could be covered with a curtain to suggest different times. I also added a wall built forward from the theater wall that would allow for built-in shelves and arched over the doorways. Rather than carrying on completely new furniture between locations, I wanted to opt for a tablecloth suggesting the restaurant that can be simply removed from the lounge tables for the college common room. In this sketch I also thought about trying to build implied flying buttresses over the window to truly include as much of Mount Holyoke as I could. The walls would have a formal wooden wainscoting on the bottom third that matches the shelves and trimming.



Figure 8

This rough sketch was my initial idea for the arched window. I included a smaller version of the wainscoting along the front of the window seat and opted to have the window pushed back into a wall nook, rather than adjacent with the rest of the wall and having the bench stick out.

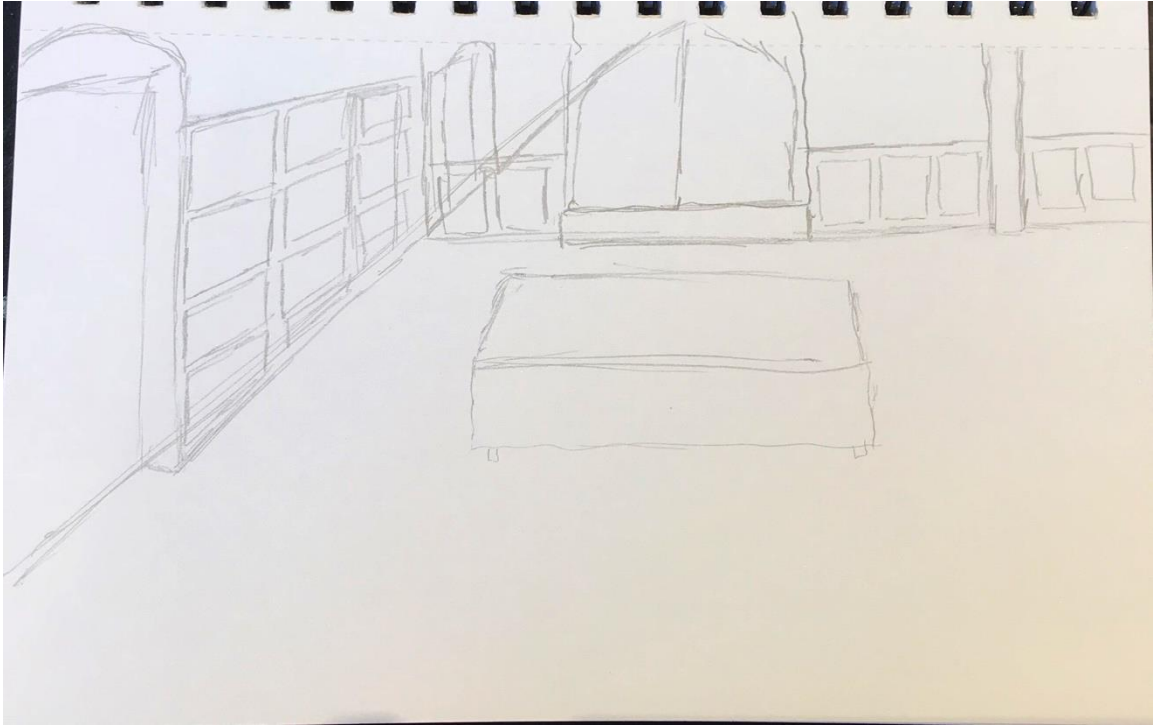


Figure 9

I often find it funny that even after knowing the space you are designing in very well, initial sketches rarely fit within the dimensions of the theater. I drew this sketch as a reprise of my earlier sketches, but while I was actually in the Callan Studio Theater in order to gain a better perspective. It reminded me of an obnoxious vertical I-beam in the upstage left section of the space that remains a force to be reckoned with. I was also reminded of how much space there really was along the left sidewall of the theater, as well as an extra door.

On November 20th I emailed my ideas to Brianne and Allyson for what I call “thoughts,” and got a fast response of “I am 100% in agreement with your design and thoughtful attention to specificity. I would like to move forward with your design.” It is extremely beneficial for a designer to work with trusting directors as it allows us to remain confident and focused on the task. Brianne was an absolute joy to work with, and she never once expressed any doubt in my abilities, making it both a healthy, exciting,

and efficient design process on all ends. Brianne had given me to “go-ahead” to start the design packet, which would essentially begin the actual formation of the set.

Building the Design Packet

The design packet is the collection of information that the scenic designer creates for the technical team. It should consist of a ground plan, renderings, detail drawings, reference images, and paint elevations. It also often helps to build a 3D scale model, and provide a full Vectorworks™ file of the set as well. These are meant to work as a way of communicating the design to the technical director so they may organize the construction and installation of the set into the space. The paint elevations do the same for the scenic charge.

Vectorworks™ is a computer-aided drawing software that is often used by theatre designers in communicating their ideas. It is very similar to the also-popular software AutoCAD™, however it allows for many more devices specific to working in the theater such as lighting instruments, soft goods, and USITT standard title blocks. It often takes much practice and usage to sufficiently learn the “Vectorworks language” and I definitely still don’t know how to use the majority of it’s functions, however I have personally found it to be the most helpful to complete my jobs as a scenic designer.

I began my process by acquiring the blank Callan Studio Theater Vectorworks™ drawing from the department, and creating a file for the show. I then drew all of my ideas in the space (but with much straighter lines and accurate dimensions) and included many more specific details (such as the shape of the molding and the preferred materials). This is usually the time consuming portion of the design process, and it becomes very difficult to declare yourself “finished.” I do believe as I was handing it over to our technical director, Stu, I was still adjusting minor details.

Once the set is virtually drawn in the space, I can then convert copies of different angles of the scenery to line drawings, making aspects easier to interpret by the technical director. I do this to create a pdf copy of the ground plans, and a specific detail drawing for every piece of the scenery. At this point, I was also going to be in charge of the painting of the set, and did not yet need to provide elaborate paint elevations. I did however still include reference images for color within the drawings as well.

On November 30th, I presented Stu with my acquired design packet, so he could then begin pricing out the materials and developing the plan for construction.

The Design Packet

All of the drawings below came from the Vectorworks™ file “Uncommon Women.vwx.”

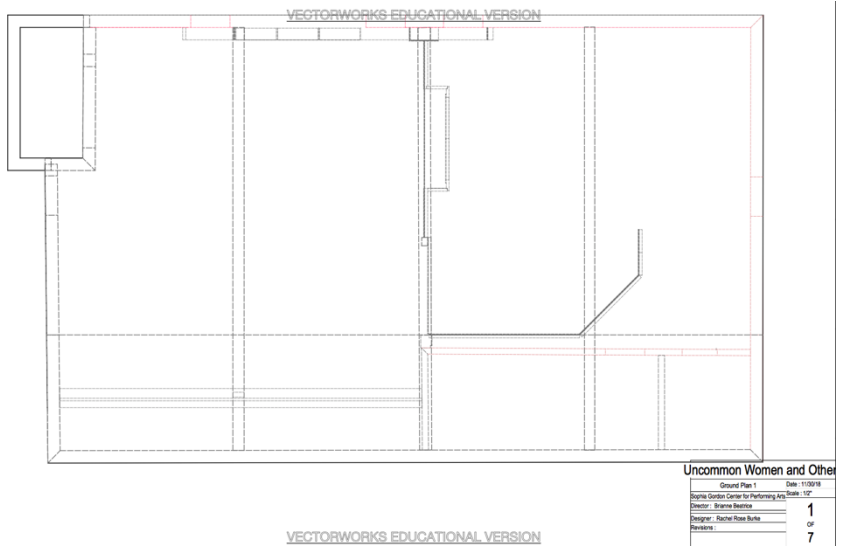


Figure 10

The ground plan for the first and last scenes of the play, taking place in the restaurant in the early 1980s.

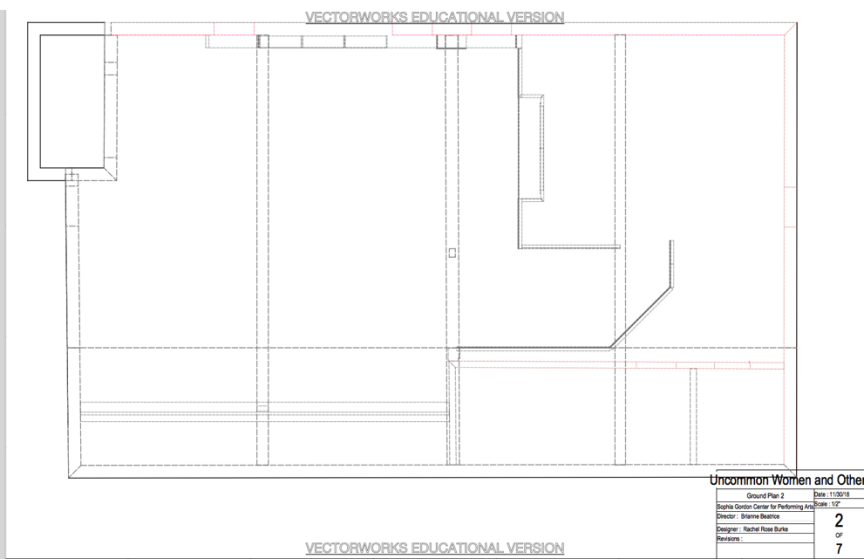


Figure 11

The ground plan for the bulk of the play, taking place in the college common room in the late 1970s. The window wall has pushed backwards, the hallway has opened up.

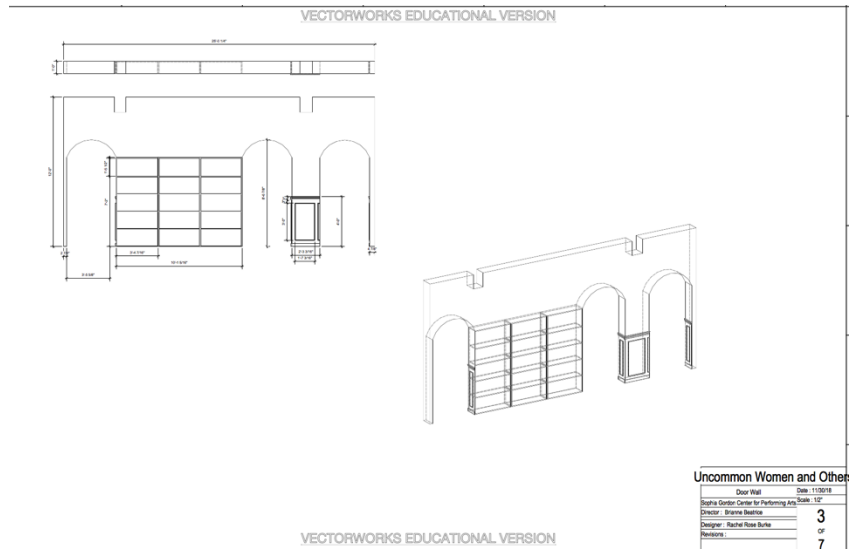


Figure 12
A detailed drawing and a perspective drawing of the “door wall.” This contains the arched doorways and the built-in shelves.

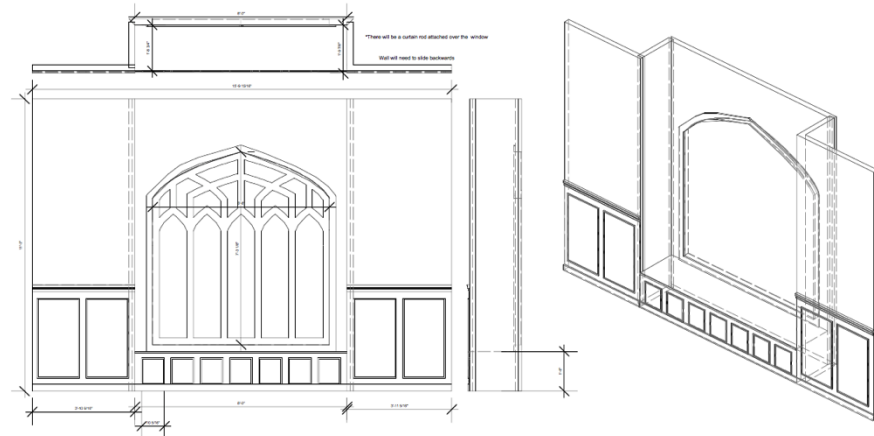


Figure 13
A detailed drawing and a perspective drawing of the “window wall” showing the window detail, window seat/nook, and the trimming.

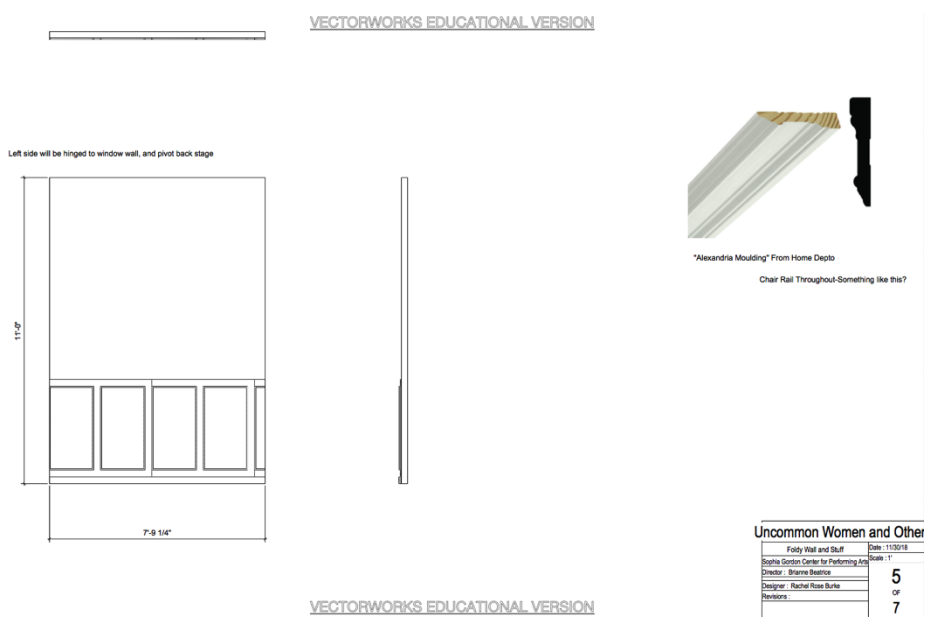


Figure 14
A detailed drawing of the “foldy wall” as well as a reference image for the shape of the molding.

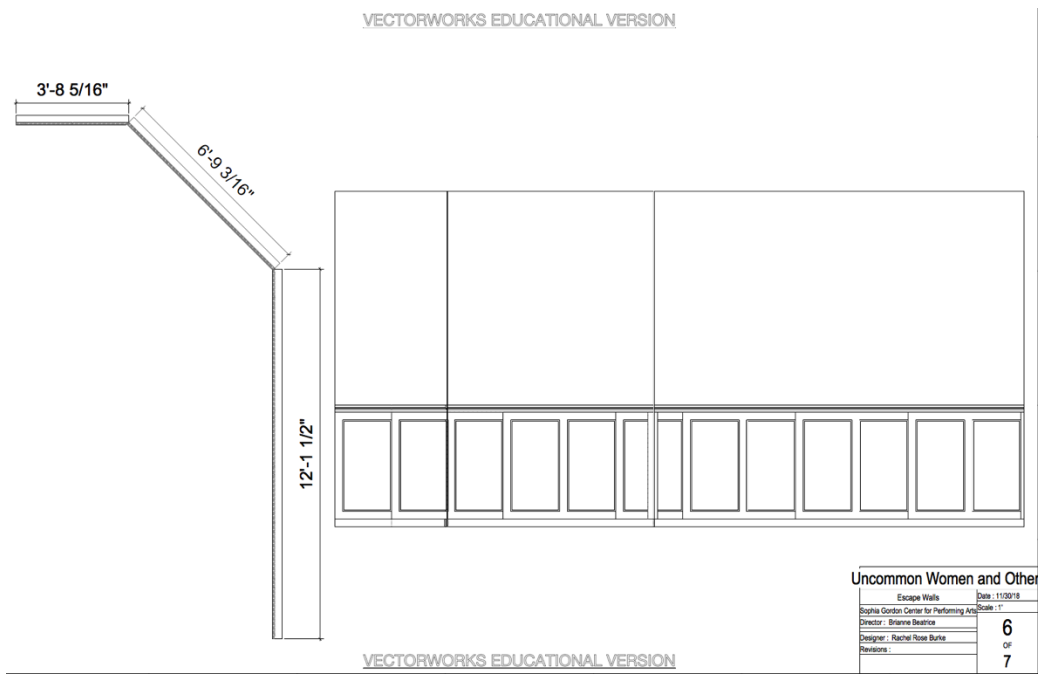


Figure 15
A detailed drawing of the layout of the “escape walls” lining the side of the hallway.

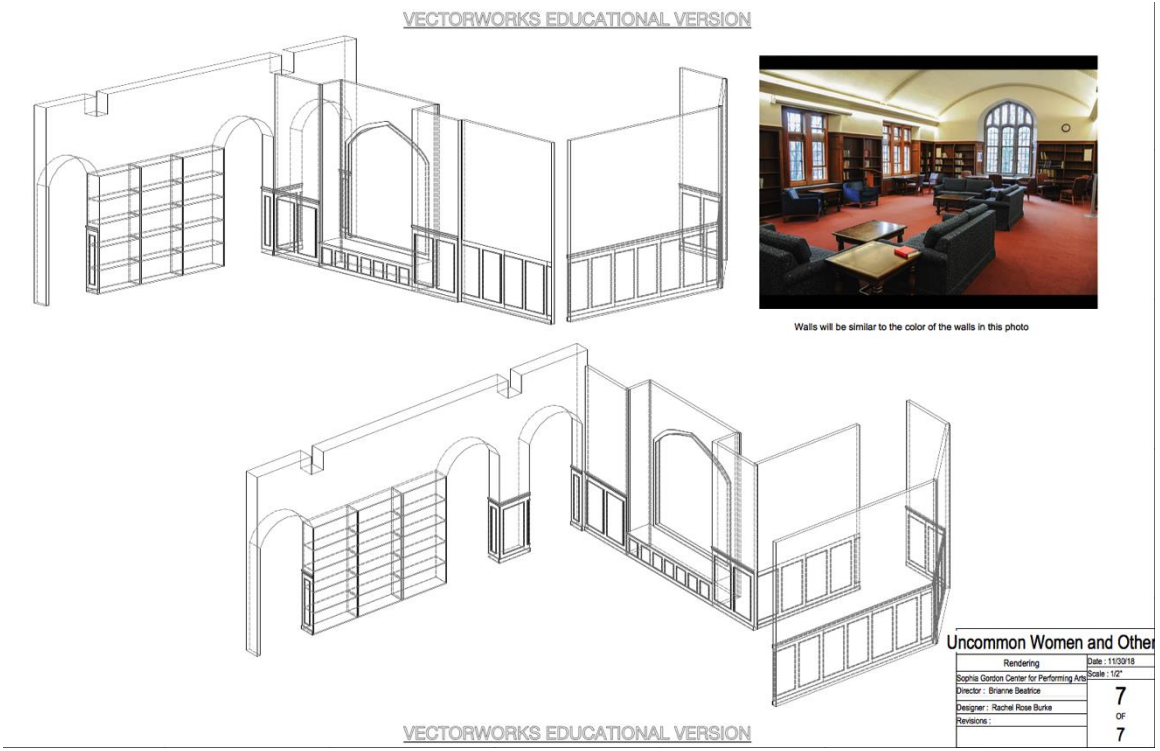


Figure 16
A perspective drawing of both ground plans, showing the overall design of the set and a reference image for color.

The 3D Scale Model

A 3-dimensional scale model is another effective tool to communicate the scenic design for a given production. As this was my capstone project, I opted to build a fully painted ¼” scale model to use as both a tool for the construction, and an added piece of work for my portfolio. Constructing the model took approximately 14 hours of labor that was completed between January 6th and 7th.

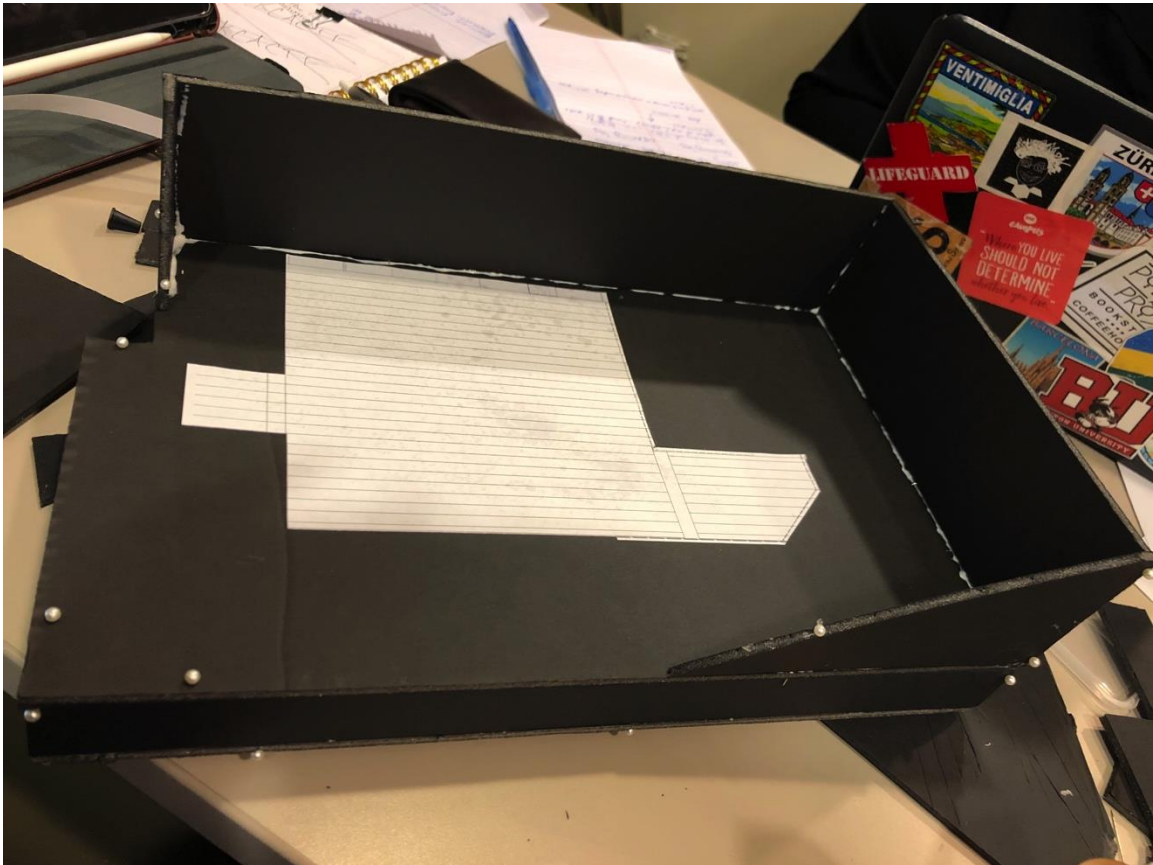


Figure 17

The proportions of the Callan Studio Theater at Salem State University

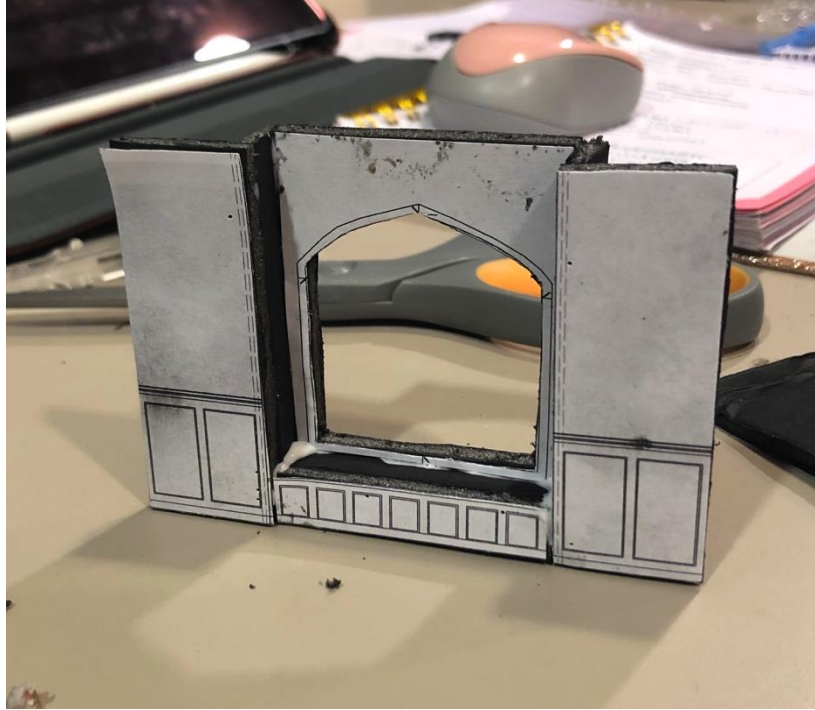


Figure 18
A mock-up model piece of the window wall, before being painted.



Figure 19
The model wall pieces in the process of being painted.



Figure 20
The finished model with the furniture in place for the college setting.

Design Execution

Budgeting

At the beginning of the process I was informed that I had a budget of \$2,000 in order to execute the design of the scenery. After I handed the design package to the technical director, it became Stu's job to interpret to cost of the design as well as how many production hours it will take to construct and install the set in the space. On December 17th, we held the official scenic budget meeting with Brianne, Allyson, Michael Harvey as my advisor, Stu, Peter Sampieri as the production manager, and myself. Stu had broken down the cost of every material needed as well as how many hours it would take to build every piece depending on different skill levels. The informational budget packet, including the labor estimate, is shown below.

Uncommon Women				
Page #	Element:	Cost	Skilled Labor (Hours)	Unskilled Labor (Hours)
	Uncommon Cost and Labor Estimate Over Budget Amount	\$1,998.02 (\$1.98)	73.4	93.11
2	Slipstage	\$2.81	4.38	4.88
3	Window Wall	\$929.00	17.08	22.53
4	Door Wall	\$565.92	15.77	20.39
5	Escape Wall	\$182.65	10.85	14.73
6	Hinged Wall	\$130.23	7.33	10.58
7	Floor	\$187.42	18.00	20.00
8	E07	\$0.00	0.00	0.00
9	E08	\$0.00	0.00	0.00
10	E09	\$0.00	0.00	0.00
11	E10	\$0.00	0.00	0.00
12	E11			
13	E12			
14	E13			
15	E14			
16	E15			
17	E16			
18	E17			
19	E18			
20	E19			
21	E20			

Figure 21

Uncommon Women

Materials Estimate					Slipstage	Other Notes:
Quantity	Element:	Units	Cost/Unit	Subtotal		
	3/4 Underlay Ply	sheet	\$49.28	\$0.00		
	1/2 Underlay Ply	sheet	\$21.00	\$0.00		
	1/4 Underlay Ply	sheet	\$15.00	\$0.00		
	5.2mm Lauan	sheet	\$16.21	\$0.00		
	2.7mm Lauan	sheet	\$5.40	\$0.00		
	4 2 x 4 KD Spruce	lineal foot	\$0.61	\$2.44		
	1 x 12 Pine	lineal foot	\$1.10	\$0.00		
	1 x 10 Pine	lineal foot	\$0.48	\$0.00		
	1 x 6 Pine	lineal foot	\$0.81	\$0.00		
	1" Sq. Tube	lineal foot	\$0.48	\$0.00		
	1/4 Masonite	sheet	\$23.36	\$0.00		
	2" Pink Foam 4x8	sheet	\$33.92	\$0.00		
	1-1/2" Foam 4x8	sheet	\$24.00	\$0.00		
	1" Pink Foam 4x8	sheet	\$18.98	\$0.00		
	1/2" MDF	sheet	\$28.00	\$0.00		
	Paint	gallons	\$50.00	\$0.00		
	Total Materials Cost			\$2.81		

Labor Estimate	Skilled -		Unskilled -		Unskilled -		Skilled Hours
	Shortest Time	Most Likely Time	Longest Time	Shortest Time	Most Likely Time	Longest Time	
Cut down platform	0.25	0.3	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.75	0.33
Reframe cut end	0.25	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.5	0.75	0.33
Cut down angle iron	0.3	0.5	0.75	0.3	0.5	0.6	0.51
Cut/drill tabs	0.75	1	1.3	1.25	1.5	2	1.01
Weld tabs to angle	0.5	0.75	1				0.75
Mount casters to platforms	1.5	2	2.5	2.5	2.75	3.25	2
Bring to Callan	0.25	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.5	0.6	0.33
Install tracks	0.5	0.75	1	0.75	1	1.5	0.75
Install platforms	0.75	1	1.5	1	1.3	1.75	1.04
Stu Cut Platform/Reframe	-0.5	-0.6	-1	-0.8	-1	-1.5	-0.65
Stu Mounted Casters	-1.5	-2	-2.5	-2.5	-2.75	-3.25	-2
							0
							0
							0
T16							0
T17							0
Total Labor Hours							4.38

Figure 22

Uncommon Women

Window Wall

Materials Estimate

Quantity	Element:	Units	Cost/Unit	Subtotal	Other Notes:
1	3/4 Underlay Ply	sheet	\$49.28	\$49.28	
	1/2 Underlay Ply	sheet	\$21.00	\$0.00	
	1/4 Underlay Ply	sheet	\$15.00	\$0.00	
8	5.2mm Lauan	sheet	\$16.21	\$129.68	
	2.7mm Lauan	sheet	\$5.40	\$0.00	
24	2 x 4 KD Spruce	lineal foot	\$0.61	\$14.64	
	1 x 12 Pine	lineal foot	\$1.10	\$0.00	
	1" Sq. Tube	lineal foot	\$0.48	\$0.00	
119	1 x 6 Pine	lineal foot	\$0.81	\$96.39	
	1" Sq. Tube	lineal foot	\$0.48	\$0.00	
	1/4 Masonite	sheet	\$23.36	\$0.00	
9	Half-round Moulding	8' stick	\$2.39	\$21.51	68' total
8	Chair Rail Moulding	lineal foot	\$1.93	\$15.44	8' Alexandria WP077
16	Baseboard Moulding	lineal foot	\$0.81	\$12.96	16' SKU 406789
1	3/4" MDF	sheet	\$36.89	\$36.89	Depot Price Extra in scrap for s
3	Plexiglas	sheet	\$143.68	\$431.04	1UNN2 Grainger
	Paint	gallons	\$50.00	\$0.00	
Total Materials Cost				\$929.00	

Labor Estimate	Skilled -	Skilled -	Skilled -	Unskilled -	Unskilled -	Unskilled -	Skilled Hours
	Shortest Time	Most Likely Time	Longest Time	Shortest Time	Most Likely Time	Longest Time	
Rip pine for flat frames	0.3	0.5	0.75	0.5	0.75	1	0.51
Crosscut pine for flats	0.75	1	1.25	1	1.3	1.5	1
Cut lauan to size	0.75	1	1.25	1	1.25	1.5	1
Cut MDF to shape	1.25	1.5	2	1.5	2	2.25	1.54
Cut wacky wood for arch	0.3	0.5	0.75	0.5	0.75	1	0.51
Cut plywood for seat	0.25	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.5	0.75	0.33
Cut 2x4 for seat	0.3	0.5	0.75	0.5	0.75	1	0.51
Assemble side flats	1.75	2	2.5	2	2.5	3	2.04
Assemble window flat	1.25	1.5	2	2	3	4	1.54
Assemble window seat	1	1.25	1.5	1	1.25	1.5	1.25
Transport to Callan	0.25	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.5	0.75	0.33
Install flats on slipstage	1.5	2	2.5	2	2.5	3	2
Attach chair rail	0.25	0.3	0.75	0.3	0.5	0.75	0.37
Attach half-round	1	1.5	2	1.5	2	2.5	1.5
Attach baseboard	0.25	0.3	0.75	0.3	0.5	0.75	0.37
Attach window cut-out	1	1.25	1.75	1.25	1.5	1.75	1.29
Attach plexiglas	0.75	1	1.25	1	1.25		1
Total Labor Hours							17.1

Figure 23

Uncommon Women

Hinged Wall

Materials Estimate

Quantity	Element:	Units	Cost/Unit	Subtotal	Other Notes:
	3/4 Underlay Ply	sheet	\$49.28	\$0.00	
	1/2 Underlay Ply	sheet	\$21.00	\$0.00	
	1/4 Underlay Ply	sheet	\$15.00	\$0.00	
3	5.2mm Lauan	sheet	\$16.21	\$48.63	
	2.7mm Lauan	sheet	\$5.40	\$0.00	
	2 x 4 KD Spruce	lineal foot	\$0.61	\$0.00	
	1 x 12 Pine	lineal foot	\$1.10	\$0.00	
	1" Sq. Tube	lineal foot	\$0.48	\$0.00	
35	1 x 6 Pine	lineal foot	\$0.81	\$28.35	
	1" Sq. Tube	lineal foot	\$0.48	\$0.00	
	1/4 Masonite	sheet	\$23.36	\$0.00	
6	Half-round Moulding	8' stick	\$2.39	\$14.34	44'
8	Chair Rail Moulding	lineal foot	\$1.93	\$15.44	8' Missed on design c
8	Baseboard Moulding	lineal foot	\$0.81	\$6.48	8'
				\$0.00	
	Wacky Wood	sheet	\$65.00	\$0.00	
	Paint	gallons	\$50.00	\$0.00	
Total Materials Cost				\$130.23	

Labor Estimate	Skilled -	Skilled -	Skilled -	Unskilled -	Unskilled -	Skilled Hours
	Shortest Time	Most Likely Time	Longest Time	Shortest Time	Most Likely Time	
Rip pine for flat frame	0.3	0.5	0.75	0.5	0.75	1 0.51
Crosscut pine for flat	0.3	0.5	0.75	0.5	0.75	1 0.51
Cut lauan to size	0.25	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.5	0.6 0.33
Assemble flat	0.3	0.5	0.75	0.75	1	1.25 0.51
Transport to Callan	0.25	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.5	0.6 0.33
Spacke seams	0.3	0.5	0.75	0.75	1	1.25 0.51
Sand spackle	0.3	0.5	0.75	0.5	0.75	1 0.51
Attach hinges	0.3	0.5	0.75	0.5	0.75	1 0.51
Attach chair rail	0.25	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.5	0.75 0.33
Attach half-round	0.75	1	1.25	1	1.25	1.5 1
Attach baseboard	0.3	0.5	0.75	0.5	0.6	0.75 0.51
Attach guide wheel	0.5	0.75	1.25	0.75	1	1.25 0.79
Install wall	0.75	1	1.25	1	1.25	1.5 1
T14						0
T15						0
T16						0
T17						0
Total Labor Hours						7.33

Figure 24

Uncommon Women

Door Wall

Materials Estimate

Quantity	Material	Units	Cost/Unit	Subtotal	Other Notes:
	3/4 Underlay Ply	sheet	\$49.28	\$0.00	
	1/2 Underlay Ply	sheet	\$21.00	\$0.00	
	1/4 Underlay Ply	sheet	\$15.00	\$0.00	
8	5.2mm Lauan	sheet	\$16.21	\$129.68	
	2.7mm Lauan	sheet	\$5.40	\$0.00	
	2 x 4 KD Spruce	lineal foot	\$0.61	\$0.00	
204	1 x 12 Pine	lineal foot	\$1.53	\$312.12	\$100 cheaper to make she
	1" Sq. Tube	lineal foot	\$0.48	\$0.00	
30	1 x 6 Pine	lineal foot	\$0.81	\$24.30	
	1" Sq. Tube	lineal foot	\$0.48	\$0.00	
	1/4 Masonite	sheet	\$23.36	\$0.00	
4	Half-round Moulding	8' stick	\$2.39	\$9.56	26'
6	Chair Rail Moulding	lineal foot	\$1.93	\$11.58	6'
6	Baseboard Moulding	lineal foot	\$0.81	\$4.86	6'
	Wacky Wood	sheet	\$65.00	\$0.00	Have enough left to not bu
				\$0.00	
	Paint	gallons	\$50.00	\$0.00	
Total Materials Cost				\$565.92	

Labor Estimate	Skilled -		Skilled - Longest Time	Unskilled - Shortest Time	Unskilled - Most Likely Time	Unskilled - Longest Time
	Skilled - Shortest Time	Most Likely Time				
Rip pine for flat frames	0.3	0.5	0.75	0.5	0.75	1
Crosscut pine for flats	0.75	1	1.25	1	1.3	1.5
Cut lauan to size	0.75	1	1.25	1	1.25	1.5
Cut pine for shelves	0.5	0.75	1	0.75	1	1.25
Assemble shelves	1.5	2	2.5	2	2.5	3
Cut wacky wood for arches	0.5	0.75	1	0.75	1	1.25
Assemble flats	3	4	5	4	5	6
Transport to Callan	0.3	0.5	0.75	0.5	0.6	0.75
Install flats	1	1.5	2	1.5	2	2.5
Spackle seams	0.5	0.75	1	0.75	1	1.25
Sand spackle	0.5	0.75	1	0.75	1	1.25
Attach chair rail	0.5	0.75	1	0.75	1	1.25
Attach half-round	0.5	0.75	1	0.75	1	1.25
Attach baseboard	0.5	0.75	1	0.75	1	1.25
T15						
T16						
T17						
Total Labor Hours						

Figure 25

Uncommon Women

Materials Estimate					Escape Wall		Other Notes:
Quantity	Element:	Units	Cost/Unit	Subtotal			
	3/4 Underlay Ply	sheet	\$49.28	\$0.00			
	1/2 Underlay Ply	sheet	\$21.00	\$0.00			
	1/4 Underlay Ply	sheet	\$15.00	\$0.00			
2	5.2mm Lauan	sheet	\$16.21	\$32.42			
	2.7mm Lauan	sheet	\$5.40	\$0.00			
	2 x 4 KD Spruce	lineal foot	\$0.61	\$0.00			
	1 x 12 Pine	lineal foot	\$1.10	\$0.00			
	1" Sq. Tube	lineal foot	\$0.48	\$0.00			
34	1 x 6 Pine	lineal foot	\$0.81	\$27.54			
	1" Sq. Tube	lineal foot	\$0.48	\$0.00			
	1/4 Masonite	sheet	\$23.36	\$0.00			
15	Half-round Moulding	8' stick	\$2.39	\$35.85	120'		
23	Chair Rail Moulding	lineal foot	\$1.93	\$44.39	23'		
23	Baseboard Moulding	lineal foot	\$0.81	\$18.63	23'		
				\$0.00			
				\$0.00			
	Paint	gallons	\$50.00	\$0.00			
Total Materials Cost				\$182.65			

Labor Estimate	Skilled -	Skilled -	Skilled -	Unskilled -	Unskilled -	Unskilled -	Skilled Hours
	Shortest Time	Most Likely Time	Longest Time	Shortest Time	Most Likely Time	Longest Time	
Rip pine for flat frames	0.3	0.5	0.75	0.5	0.75	1	0.51
Crosscut pine for flats	0.3	0.5	0.75	0.5	0.75	1	0.51
Cut lauan to size	0.3	0.5	0.75	0.5	0.75	1	0.51
Assemble flats	0.75	1	1.25	1.25	1.5	1.75	1
Transport to Callan	0.25	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.5	0.6	0.33
Repair stock flats as needed	1	1.5	2	1.5	2	2.5	1.5
Attach flats to stock flats	1	1.5	2	1.5	1.75	2	1.5
Attach chair rail	0.75	1	1.25	1.25	1.5	1.75	1
Attach half-round	1.5	2	2.5	2	2.5	3	2
Attach baseboard	0.75	1	1.25	1	1.25	1.5	1
Install flats	0.75	1	1.25	1.25	1.5	1.75	1
							0
							0
							0
T15							0
T16							0
T17							0
Total Labor Hours							10.9

Figure 26

From these numbers it was apparent that the set would cost about \$30.72 less than our budgeted amount, and Stu strongly believed that the hours of labor were within our timeline. Everyone was pleased with the information, and Peter, as the production manager and chair of the department, officially approved the design to be completed.

Production Meetings

Production meetings are regularly scheduled meetings that include all members of the production team of a given show. The goal is to go around the table to each department in order to check in on how the process is going. It is essential that all persons involved with a production have open lines of communication and remain on the same page as far as timeline and scheduling. The production manager of the theater typically runs these meetings; therefore Peter Sampieri would begin and go around to each department.

The following are my notes and action steps from each production meeting:

Production Meeting on January 16th, 2019

- Schedule a meeting with Mathias to find out when he needs to hang and focus lights
- Attend a props meeting with Liam and Stacey on Friday the 18th to discuss props and furniture needs
- Meet with assigned scenic charge, Erin Shine

Production Meeting on January 23rd, 2019

- Schedule and announce times for Paint calls
- I will be attending the rehearsal tonight (1/23)
- When will the plexi-glass be delivered?
- Inform the department that the paint sink keeps clogging
- Allyson would like if I contribute some items (model, sketches, design concept statement) for the lobby display

- The program bio deadline is February 1st

Production Meeting on February 6th, 2019

- Please deliver design concept statement to Allyson as soon as possible
- There will be a production meeting on the 9th at 1:30PM

Production Meeting on February 13th, 2019

- Have a wonderful opening night!

Designer Presentations

The objective of designer presentations is to share the design aspects with the cast of the production. In order to help them get into their characters as soon as possible, the design presentations are usually held relatively early in the rehearsal schedule. It allows for the cast to envision the world of their characters so they may delve deeper into their individual processes. For my presentation, I brought in the scale model as well as a PowerPoint presentation that displayed all of my research, sketches and renderings.

The designer presentations were held at the start of rehearsal on January 15th. Overall the presentations were successful and provided a positive and rejuvenating atmosphere for the entire cast and production team. Seeing all the designs come together in such a cohesive manner allowed for all persons involved to envision the true nature of the play.

Props – Swatching & Pulling

On January 18th, I sat down with both Liam and Stacey Horne-Harper (the faculty props master) and discussed all of the needed props and furniture pieces for the show. We decided to use a couch that we already had on hand, but it would need to be re-upholstered along with three missing lounge chairs and five missing dining chairs. There would be a larger “study/dining” table and two smaller matching coffee tables. The coffee tables needed to be able to hide beneath or beside the larger table, for when it would be under the tablecloth in the first and final scene. Other needed props consisted of a period telephone, a record player, records, a typewriter, books, blankets, curtains, and miscellaneous set dressings.

On January 24th, the three of us ventured to a downtown fabric store in search of the right material for the couch and lounge chairs. I wanted to find a solid color, as was shown in my research, that would suggest the type of commonly found furniture in education settings. Colors that typically work are neutral blues, maroons, or in that time period; orange. While many general research images I had found showed bright orange faux-leather couches, orange was one color that never existed in my research specific to Mount Holyoke. Even their official school colors consisted of quite literally every color *but* orange. With that in mind, and with the fact that the wood treatment would consist of a reddish tone, I opted to go with a darker, neutral blue (shown below).

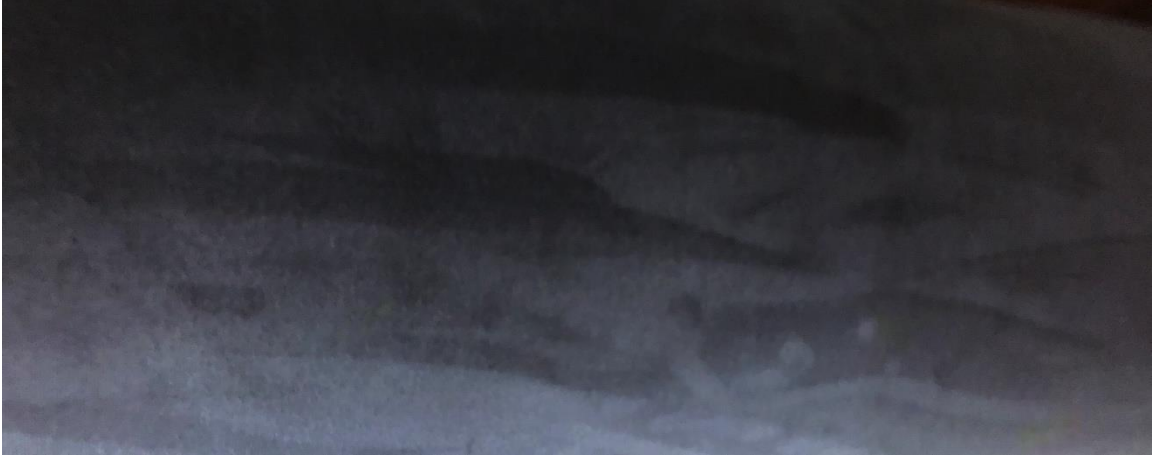


Figure 27

While many props were pulled from our own stock, we borrowed some larger pieces from the stock at Emerson College. On January 28th, the three of us again ventured to their warehouse and managed to find three matching lounge chairs, five dining chairs, extra records, two period telephones, and even a few menus for the restaurant scene. These trips proved to be very successful, and I was very lucky to work with such an efficient properties team.

Final Touches

Toward the end of the process, as time drew closer to opening night, I worked with Stacey and Liam to fill the space with final touches known as “set dressing.” Stacey suggested a large bulletin board for the hallway to fill with period and scripturally relevant flyers. Liam was able to fill the bookshelves with many books and period educational items. We later opted to add another sideboard at the end of the hallway with some “school awards” placed on top to fill the gaps and suggest a further history of the environment. Stacey and Liam worked with me to hang paintings on the walls, and add the last-minute hand props from the director and cast-members, as that is a typical occurrence during tech weeks.

Building Process

Before the final touches go up however, the set has to be constructed, installed and painted. Stu Grieve as the technical director and Katrina Tuck as his assistant were primarily responsible for the building aspect of the set. It is certainly not unusual for the technical director to have several questions for the designer throughout the build, and therefore Stu and I kept a constant flow of communication. Questions such as “can the escape wall be 15/16” wider in order to use a stock flat?” are very common, and are more times than not responded to with an “of course!” I would consistently check in with Stu for any other pieces of information that he may need, and I would make sure he was always able to work on what was prioritized by not painting any piece that was in-progress.

Painting Process

As a scenic designer, it is very common to also work as the scenic charge, or “lead scenic painter.” Later in the process Erin Shine did join us as the official charge, which allowed me to focus on more of the “designer duties.” I did however; proceed to paint much of the set. Back in December I had pre-mixed all of the paint that would be needed, in order to get a better idea of how much more paint would need to be purchased. I used the paint to quickly develop a paint sample (shown below) that would be easy to follow for all other painters.



Figure 28

Overall the painting process went smoother than anticipated, as I actually had to step out for a week in the middle to attend the Kennedy Center’s American College Theatre Festival. When I had come back, the set was close to completion, and only a few paint notes were left.

Designer Concept Statement

A “designer’s concept statement” is truly just that. Allyson, as she was preparing the lobby display, asked if I could post one for the audience to potentially read while waiting for the show to begin. Often it simply and briefly expresses the ideas behind the designer’s visual conception. My statement went as,

“Mount Holyoke College was the first of the “Seven Sister” schools that helped to pave the way for women’s education. Founded in 1837, MHC has much history and notability for producing highly educated and intelligent young women, otherwise referred to as “uncommon.” Designing the scenery for *Uncommon Women and Others* by Wendy Wasserstein has proven to be my absolute favorite and most impactful opportunity to date, and I could not be more honored to have such a part in this process. After much imagery research of the architecture and décor on the grounds of the college, the set for the show started to develop. Many rooms in MHC included large romanesque windows that while seeming at first like a simple element of aesthetic, also provided a sense of hope and wonder as the uncommon women in the show look forward into their potential futures. The question of whether to feel pleased with “settling” down with a husband and kids, or to fight to pursue uncommon and riveting goals in business or law, haunts the students as they feel their time quickly running out and their worlds caving in to pressure them into whatever norm and social role they’re “supposed” to play. My intention with the design was to build a realistic and intimate set that allowed the characters to spread out independently while bonding with their fellow intellectuals to question our

society that pushes against the idea that women are just as capable, confident and intelligent as any other human being, and should be taken seriously in all fields of study. While the play takes place mostly in the late 1970's, there are still many relevancies between the way women were perceived then to how we are perceived now. And while it is still perfectly acceptable for a female to decide that she would like to focus on raising a family; the ability to choose her ambitions, her companions, and her course of life should always remain hers.”

Result

KCACTF Respondent

On February 15th, we had a respondent from region one of the “Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival,” or KCACTF, see the show and respond to it in a conversational atmosphere with the cast, crew and production team. Dale Young enjoyed the show tremendously and commented on every aspect of the production. He expressed that the set really “did its job” and he adored how the wall pushed back and opened up in order to make the transition. Young also commented a lot on the set dressing, which was collaborated between the props team and I, saying that they were extremely “creative” and really “able to put him in the world of the play.” He especially liked the bulletin board with the relative flyers pinned on it, representing different events that were mentioned in the script.

After the discussion, I introduced myself further and asked him specifically what his thoughts were on the window in the set. He expressed that he had several ideas as to what it “meant” and stood for, and believed that it would evoke a very different and effective emotion on every individual audience member. I explained how I wanted to suggest the passage of time and the “wonder of our own individual futures” as we move from one chapter to the next, and that I liked how windows both show the outside world, while reflecting our own images, as if they are helping us use our past to build our future. He expressed that he really enjoyed this idea and was very please with the thought that I had put into not only the window, but the whole set.

Pre-Show Discussion

The Salem State University Theatre department holds either a “talk-back” or “pre-show discussion” before or after a performance during each show run of the season. For *Uncommon Women and Others* we had decided to hold a “pre-show discussion” on Thursday, February 21st. The panel consisted of the assistant director Allyson Kinch, costume designer Jerry Johnson, lighting designer Mathias Cordona and myself. We had a larger audience than expected, at around 35 people, who were both very active listeners and participants. Without having seen the set, I received many questions about my process and way of thinking while designing the show. It was truly very heartening to hear so many people genuinely interested in the work that had gone into the production.

While there were many technical questions for the panel, there was also much interest and discussion about the themes within the play. One of the audience members had also been very excited to announce how she had performed in the same play back in the 1990s, but commented on the fact that her performance had no actual set, and she was extremely excited to see a “fuller” production that could really bring the audience into the “world.”

That evening also happened to be the theater’s “Alumni Night” and was completely sold out. After the first scene when the set was transitioning into the college setting, something happened that was almost magical. The audience that night was so involved and into the world that the set transition triggered a sense of intrigue and enthusiastic applause that I had never heard in during any show in

that space prior to that night. Everything I had worked for truly felt worth it in that moment.

Reviews

There were two written reviews of the production throughout the run. The first was written by Keith Powers with GateHouse Media, published on February 18th (Powers), and the second was from Shiela Barth with the Winthrop Sun Transcript in the February 28th paper (Barth).

Powers mostly focuses on the performances and direction, however he comments very briefly on the design elements. He wrote “Sets were simple: rooms with chairs” as well as “The well-rehearsed set transitions-accented by some out-of-control dancing in the background-were crisp.” As a designer I have become very aware of the importance of the performance aspect in any production. One of the most important jobs as a scenic designer is to not distract from the dialogue within the story. The set needs to make sense and support the ideas within the play. If the set is too minimal, it will both make the actor’s jobs more difficult, as well as force the audience to not be distracted by the all-black background of the musical taking place in an apparent wealthy 1930s mansion. On the other end, if the set is too busy and contrasting, the audience has to work harder to focus on the dialogue. If the reviewer has not spent their entire experience recording every minute detail of the scenery, it is a compliment in itself.

Similarly, Barth writes on the performance of each actress and comments much on how well the production was received by the audience who had “waited in line” for the once again “sold out house.” She writes about the ideas in the play and how they are still relevant to today’s society with how the girls’ “future was

limited, mostly to achieving part-time jobs and marrying the right man... Wasserstein's play remains relevant, because we haven't, overall, achieved equal raises and salaries for women."

Phone: 617-846-3700 Fax: 781-485-1403

The Winthrop Sun Transcript • Thursday, February 28, 2019

Page 15

Getting Out

UNCOMMON WOMEN AND OTHERS

By Sheila Barth

Although the last day of Salem State University's (SSU) two-week production of Wendy Wasserstein's play, "Uncommon Women and Others," was Sunday, Feb. 24, and the house sold out, several people waited in line, hoping to get a seat in the cozy Callan Studio Theater.

What made this production so special?

Department chairman-professor Peter Sampieri spells it out in his printed comment: "...the production ... is about 10 incredible women played by ten incredible women, written by an incredible woman, directed and assistant-directed by two incredible women, shaped and served by a student scenic designer and stage manager, who are also incredible women."

Wasserstein, prolific author of the celebrated "Heidi Chronicles," "The Sisters Rosenweig," and others, went



Cast of Uncommon Women and Others at Salem State University.

on to win a Tony Award, Pulitzer Prize and more during her career. She died at age 55 of leukemia.

There's nothing earth-shattering or revelatory in this two-act, two-hour play that's geared to mature audiences. In fact, it's the first play Wasserstein wrote, her master's degree thesis, at Yale University in 1977.

The Mount Holyoke College undergrad and champi-

on of feminist causes simply highlighted an impromptu reunion of six Mount Holyoke friends-graduates, and several flashbacks of their time together on campus, during the cusp of the feminist movement.

Wasserstein's characters are clearly drawn. Their personalities, hopes, accomplishments or lack thereof, are magnified by director-former Salem State University graduate Bri-

anne Beatrice, and costume designer Jerry L. Johnson.

SSU senior Chelsea Titchnell nicely portrays Kate Quin, self-driven and successful lawyer. Freshman Mish Pothier is outstanding as wise-cracking, sometimes shocking feminist Rita Altabel, who grosses everyone out, declaring she took feminist Germaine Greer's advice and tasted her own menstrual blood.

SSU junior Olivia Raso

portrays flamboyant Muffet DiNicola with flair, while SSU freshman Julia McDonough, portraying Samantha Stewart, is more rational. Her goal is to become engaged and marry her boyfriend.

SSU freshman Hannah Bradley is comical as goody two-shoes Susie Friend; SSU senior Meg Brown portraying Holly Kaplan is uptight, as she secretly tries to call long distance a guy she met at a museum; and SSU senior Linnaea Barry as Leilah is more serious, reserved. Upon graduation, she's going to Iraq, to learn more about people and their circumstances.

SSU junior Demi DiCarlo is enigmatic as Carter, the new member of the group, and SSU senior Paige Ruggles is comically saccharine as tea-time brandy-imbibing house mother, Mrs. Plumm, who reminds us and the girls to "not put their feet on the furniture".

An intoned narrator's voice sets scenes in a restaurant for

the girls' six-year reunion, and shifts back and forth to reminisces of their 1972-3 college days.

At the time, women's rights and feminism were on the rise, but these coeds' future was limited, mostly to achieving part-time jobs and marrying the right man.

Thankfully, today's young women have increased opportunity; however, Wasserstein's play remains relevant, because we haven't, overall, achieved equal raises and salaries for women.

On another note, award-winning internationally acclaimed a cappella quartet, Women of the World, present story-telling through song, performing in 32+ of the world's languages, Feb. 28, 7:30 p.m., at Salem State University Recital Hall, 71 Loring Ave., Salem \$20; seniors, non Salem State students, 18 and above years old, \$15; under 18, free. salemstate.edu/arts, 978-542-6365, salemstatetikets.com...

Figure 29

This proves that the overall production did its job by shining light on these issues that Brianne wanted to bring up in our audience. Barth does however call the Callan Studio Theater "cozy" which also comments on my goal to provide a comfortable environment for the characters to study and discover themselves as both women and individuals.

Interviews

After the show opened, I conducted several discussions with volunteers who had either worked on the show, or saw the show as a member of an audience. My goal was to retrieve honest information about how they felt the scenic elements affected their experience, as well as what I, as a designer, could have done better. I conducted these discussions with people from different categories such as performers, educated audience members, non-educated audience members, fellow designers, and the director and my faculty advisor. By hearing from people with different focuses and backgrounds, I hoped to receive a well-rounded overall opinion of the design, as well as the role of scenic design as a whole in any production.

Since theatre is a very collaborative art, the job of the scenic designer directly affects the process of several other members of the production team. When asked, "In what ways did the set design affect your process?" Allyson responded that the set gave her and the performers "much to play with" and "lots of room for creativity." She explained how it helped her to place the performers in the world of the play, opening them up to settle into their characters. However before the set can be their for the performers, it must first be built by the shop which was run by technical director, Stu Grieve and his assistant, Katrina Tuck. Katrina expressed how their job was directly dependent on the scenic designer's, as they had to simply "build what was designed." I asked her how that process went, working with me as the designer, and she responded that since we had effective communication, the process was "relatively easy to execute" other than

the fact that the theater was old and full of interesting surprises. Liam Conlon, the props master, also had direct communication with me throughout much of the process. I asked him, “Did your job ever depend on the job of the scenic designer at any time? How so?” Liam responded with “yes, I needed to match the era and style of the furniture and set dressing to that of the overall design of the set.” In order to create a whole cohesive design in the space, all elements including props, costumes, and even sound had to blend well to establish a trustworthy bond with the audience.

Besides the technical elements, I also wanted to know how my process had affected those of the performers. I asked actresses Lynnaea Barry and Paige Ruggles, “Did the set affect your process as an actress? How so?” Lynnaea expressed that it “created different ways for [her] to live throughout [her] character... the set affects [her] process by its ability to enhance ones performance, and creates an opportunity for ones character to move gracefully and confidently between doorways, hallways, and of course the moving set pieces.” She also said that the set “gave a familiar energy to walk into, one that makes someone feel comforted or welcome.” Answering the same question, Paige expressed that the set was “a huge part of getting into character...and gave Mrs. Plumm an added layer of character development.”

In order to establish the effectiveness of my design for shaping the world of the play, I also conducted interviews with theatrically educated audience members Stephen Zubricki, Claudia Marchionda and Caitlyn Buja, as well as a non-theatrically educated audience member named Theresa Soldan. I asked them,

“How would you say the set design affected your experience of the production? How did it affect your mood in the environment?” Answering this question Stephen Zubricki said, “There was a variety of acting locations which worked well for giving each character their own specific place of comfort... also helped to make the audience feel comfortable with them, in their space.” Claudia Marchionda responded with, “the realism of the set-the details of the books, the aging and the scuffs on the floor boards-really made me feel like I was there.” She expressed how she liked that the set “molded to the Callan theater.” Similarly, Caitlyn Buja added that, “it helped transform the play in where it takes place...it was easy to understand where they were.” In order to try and achieve a different point of view, I asked the same question to Theresa Soldan, who is a political science major rather than another theatrically educated opinion. She responded, “It made everything seem more fluid to me. The movement of the scene changes were smooth and made the story continue to progress in a comprehensive way.” She also stated that, “when the wall moved back and forth, the window curtains closing made it clear that we were in a different time period and helped myself as an audience member make that transition.”

My overall goal as a scenic designer is to effectively help tell the story of the play, in collaboration with the vision of the director, for the benefit of the audience. In order to establish how well this was accomplished in the process of *Uncommon Women and Others*, I also interviewed my faculty advisor and professional scenic designer, Michael Harvey. Michael has been designing scenery for the theatre for over 30 years. After he saw the show, I asked him,

“what effect did the set for *Uncommon Women and Others* have on your overall experience of the production?” Michael responded, “It was evocative of the period in time and location and gave off a mood of comfort and education. It did its job in terms of storytelling and seemed very believable.” I then asked, “Was there any aspect in particular that took your mind out of the world of the play? Was there anything that held you in?” He explained how technically, while the furniture was from the same time period, it likely would have been older furniture in that space, as it was a historic college. He also would have preferred if I had incorporated practicals, or light sources, on the walls in the design. However, he did “love the paint treatments and texture” which is often difficult in a small black-box type space, as the audience sits relatively close to the scenery. I asked, “What parts of the design, if any, were strong? What parts were weak?” Michael responded that, “the window was very strong” and he was “glad it wasn’t completely stained-glass” but rather a mix of frosted glass with stained pieces. He concluded in the end that the overall design, in his opinion, “did its job in effectively helping to tell the story.”

In Conclusion

In conclusion, this experience was extremely valuable to my career as a scenic designer. I was blessed to be assigned a project where the story was so close to my current circumstances, where I was able to freely conduct the job which I love, on a piece of art that also evoked its meaning on my own mentality. The process completely rejuvenated my passion for scenic design at a time when I needed it most. The stress of graduating from a university, right before stepping into the “real world” as a female not knowing where my next chapter will lead, was extremely overwhelming. However it was through this project that I was able to find my confidence and pride in not only my art, but myself as an individual, which has filled me with nothing but love for life. Simultaneously, I have learned to accept every experience as an opportunity to learn and grow, and that failures are never actually “failures” but “chances” to do better the next time.

Uncommon Women and Others was a story written by Wendy Wasserstein, and directed by Brianne Beatrice with assistance from Allyson Kinch. Designing the set for this show along side the rest of our “uncommon” family was an experience that will stay with me forever, not only as a growing scenic designer, but as an “uncommon woman” herself. This process was a mere demonstration of the challenges and progresses of the job of a scenic designer, as well as the impact the work leaves on the audience and the “others” who helped bring the story to life.



Figure 30-Photography Credit to Benjamin Rose Photography

Appendices

Imagery Index

Figure 1-Reference image of MHC study room (Skelley).....	6
Figure 2-Reference image of MHC study room (Skelley).....	7
Figure 3-Reference image of MHC study room window (Gray).....	8
Figure 4-Women's college dorm room ([Unknown])	9
Figure 5-Inspirational quote from Michelle Obama (Unknown).....	10
Figure 6-Poster of Rosie the Riveter (Collection, Print).....	11
Figure 7-Initial sketch for scenic vision.....	13
Figure 8-Rough sketch of window design	14
Figure 9-2 nd Sketch for scenic vision.....	15
Figure 10-Ground plan for first and last scene	19
Figure 11-Ground plan for middle of show	19
Figure 12-Vectorworks drawing of "door wall"	20
Figure 13-Vectorworks drawing of "window wall"	20
Figure 14-Vectorworks drawing of "foldy wall"	21
Figure 15-Vectorworks drawing of "escape wall"	21
Figure 16-Vectorworks drawing of the set in perspective	22
Figure 17-3-Dimensional model of the callan	23
Figure 18-Model piece of "window wall"	24
Figure 19-Process photo of painting the model pieces	24
Figure 20-Finished model of the set	25
Figure 21-Budget and labor summary	26
Figure 22-Budget and labor of the slipstage	27
Figure 23-Budget and labor of the "window wall"	28
Figure 24-Budget and labor of the "hinged wall"	29
Figure 25-Budget and labor of the "door wall"	30
Figure 26-Budget and labor of the "escape wall"	31
Figure 27-The color swatch of the fabric used to upholster the furniture	36
Figure 28-Small paint sample of the treatment.....	38
Figure 29-News article by Shiela Barth.....	45
Figure 30-Final Production Photo of the Set.....	51

Uncommon Women And Others

BY WENDY WASSERSTEIN



DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.

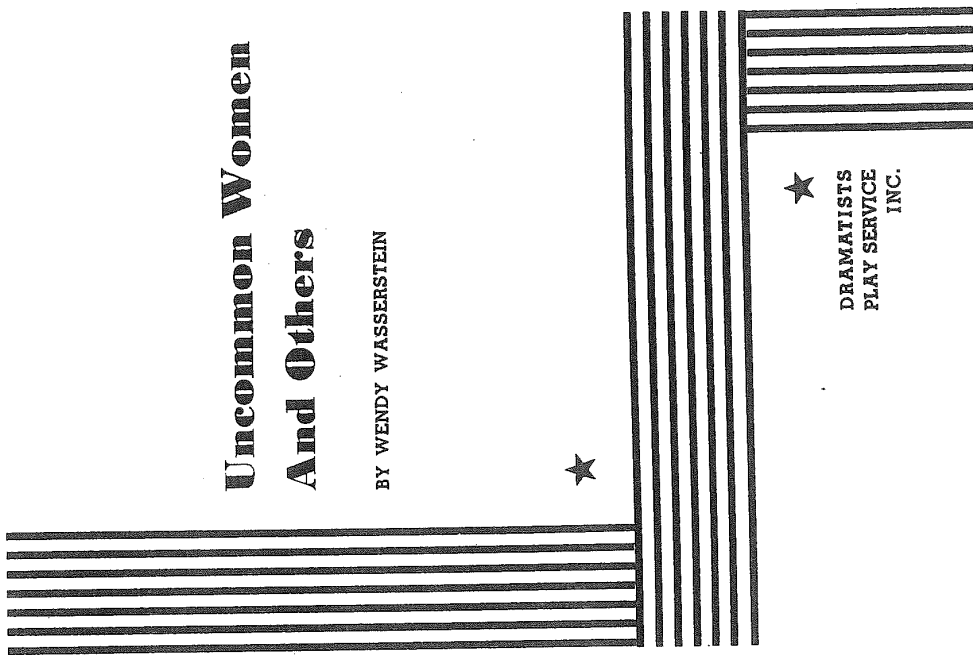
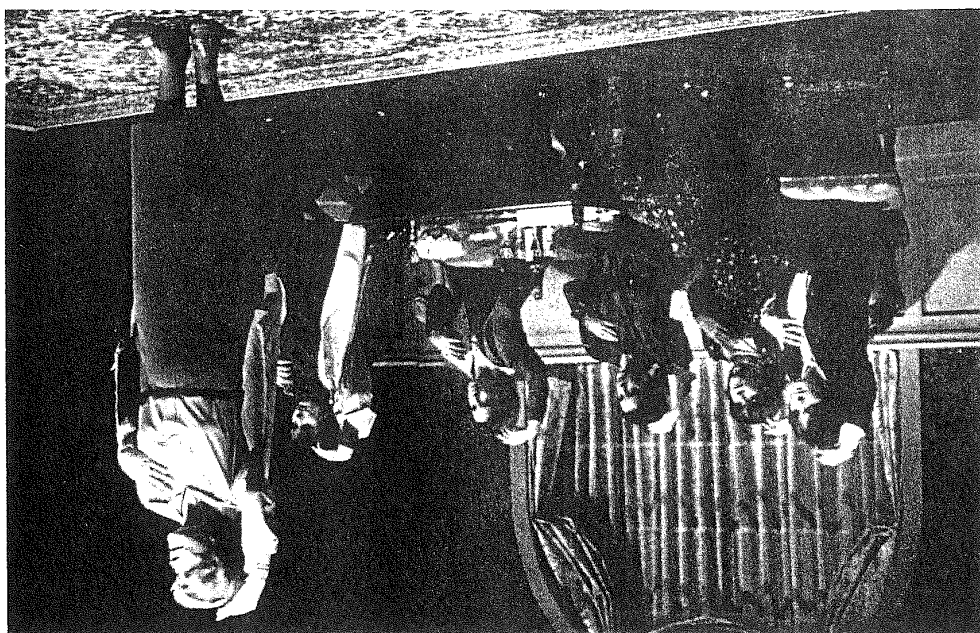


PHOTO BY ROGER GREENWALT
Ellen Parker, Ann McDonough, Swoosie Kurtz, Jill Eikenberry, Alma Cuervo and Josephine Nichols, in a scene from the New York production of "Uncommon Women and Others." Set designed by James Tilton.



UNCOMMON WOMEN AND OTHERS was presented by The Phoenix Theatre at the Marymount Manhattan Theatre, in New York City, on November 21, 1977. It was directed by Steven Robman; the scenery and lighting were by James Tilton; and the costumes were by Jennifer von Mayrhauser. The cast, in order of appearance, was as follows:

- KATE QUIN Jill Eikenberry
- SAMANTHA STEWART Ann McDonough
- HOLLY KAPLAN Alma Cuervo
- MUFFET DI NICOLA Ellen Parker
- RITA ALTABEL Swoosie Kurtz
- Mrs. PLUMM Josephine Nichols
- SUSIE FRIEND Cynthia Herman
- CARTER Anna Levine
- LEILAH Glenn Close

CHARACTERS

In the present:

- KATE QUIN
- SAMANTHA STEWART
- MUFFET DI NICOLA
- HOLLY KAPLAN
- RITA ALTABEL

At the college:

- MRS. PLUMM
- SUSIE FRIEND
- CARTER, a catatonic
- LEILAH

SETTING

A restaurant in the present, and six years earlier at a college for women.

CHARACTERS

MUFFET DINICOLA: An attractive woman, wry and cheerful. Muffet is stylish and attractive to men. Her friends would agree that she has charm. Muffet's intelligence is quick, but she never dotes on it. As Muffet approaches thirty she is re-examining her younger tenets that men were just more interesting than women and life would simply fall into place. This examination is not always evident in her behavior because it is just beginning. And anyway, Muffet remains charming, especially to men.

HOLLY KAPLAN: Hair disheveled, yet well cut. She wears expensive clothes that don't quite match, not because she doesn't know what matches, but because she doesn't want to try too hard. That would be too embarrassing. A reliever for many years on the adage, "if she lost twenty pounds, she'd be a very pretty girl, and if she worked, she'd do very well." Holly alternates between being a spectator and a spectacle. She has devised a strong moral code of warmth to those you love and wit to those you're scared of. Holly saw the Radio City Easter Show in Second Grade and planned to convert.

KATE QUIN: In business suit, holding an attache case that she is quite aware of. The attache case alternately makes her feel like a successful grown-up, or hand-cuffed. Perhaps, the most handsome of the women, she is composed and has always made a good impression. Like Muffet she knows the potential of being attractive. Unlike Muffet, she's not sure it's nice, or the right image to let people know. Katie always walks with direction and that's why it's fun to make her stop and laugh.

SAMANTHA STEWART: A gently attractive woman. If another old adage, "Smith is to bed and Holyoke is to wed" is true, it is women like Samantha who have secured Holyoke's side of the claim. Quiet, tasteful, yet one would always notice her at a party. However, she would be so gracious in finding out what you do, that her work would always remain a suspicion. Samantha is like a Shetland cable knit sweater, a classic. The daughter of the mayor of Naperville, she is a closet wit, or she wouldn't have made the friends that she did in college.

6

RITA ALTABEL: In 1966 Rita Altabel won a D.A.R. scholarship to Mount Holyoke. In 1968 she walked through the Yale Cross Campus Library with the Yale Crew Team. Rita had cowbells on her dress. In 1976 she wasn't sure if the C.I.A. had put L.S.D. into all polyester shirts. But she knew it was only safe to wear cotton. Rita *refuses* to live down to expectations. She shouldn't worry about it. Her imagination would never let her.

AT THE COLLEGE

MRS. PLUMM: Housemother of North Stimson Hall. Mrs. Plumm, like the furniture is straight-backed but cozy. You can't help but giggle in her presence and grow fonder of her dignity with hindsight.

SUSIE FRIEND: Pink Villager sweater, Pink Villager skirt, pink knee socks, pink yarn in her hair, and *Weejuns*, of course. Susie Friend is head of freshmen, co-ordinator of Father-Daughter Weekend, Spring Weekend, Fall House Parties, the student-faculty committee on library responsibility, and never, unfortunately, gets exhausted.

CARTER: A frail girl in an oversized skirt and shirt that she wore all through prep-school. Carter may seem catatonic, but she has a rich inner life—though it is up to debate whether she is a genius or just quiet. She is inner-directed.

LEILAH: Leilah, like Kate is a handsome woman. In fact, she is second to Kate in her attractiveness and in her academic life. Leilah is serious and somehow seems distant from her friends. She is very tailored to the point of almost rigid. But behind her rigidity is a genuine kindness and a strong intellect. Leilah's parents are probably high powered academics but she has not told them or her friends any of the fears and anxiety she is beginning to feel her senior year. Sometimes Leilah spends a great deal of time alone being admirable.

7

Uncommon Women And Others

ACT ONE

SCENE 1

THE SETTING

The present, 1978, in a restaurant, and six years earlier at a college for women. In the present the women are around 27 years old.

The play should be played on a single playing area. In other words the restaurant in the present becomes the college living room. This will give continuity to the episodic nature of the play. Also, the play is really a memory play and this should be made clear. The benches indicated in the scene design are also used as lounges or beds for the girls. I would try to keep it simple and use pastel colors that would fit both a ladies restaurant and a women's college.

As far as costumes, the girls should be wearing what they first wore in the restaurant. However, slight alterations and additions could take place in the past, like sweaters or Rita's cap. The characters who enter at the college, however, should be dressed for that particular period. Finally, Holly should wear her raccoon coat to the restaurant.

MAN'S VOICE. The college produces women who are persons in their own rights: Uncommon Women who as individuals have the personal dignity that comes with intelligence, competence, flexibility, maturity, and a sense of responsibility. This can happen without loss of gaiety, charm or femininity. Through its long history the college has graduated women who help to make this a better, happier world. Whether their primary contributions were in the home or the wider community, in advocations or vocations, their role has been constructive. The college makes its continuing contribution to society in the form of graduates whose intellectual quality is high, and whose responsibility to others is exceptional. *(As Man's Voice begins lights come up on Kate Quin making final adjustments on a restaurant table. Enter Samantha Stewart. They embrace. The Women speak softly to each other. As the Man's Voice fades, Kate gets up from the table and Holly Kaplan enters.)*

SAMANTHA. *(Laughs.)* Holly, it's nice to see you.

HOLLY. You too Samantha. You cut your hair.

SAMANTHA. Yeah, I didn't want to look like Jean Shrimpton anymore.

HOLLY. Katie. How long are you in town for?

KATE. I don't know. I'm here on a women and law conference. Very grown-up, huh? I am now the young spokesperson at all the obligatory boring occasions.

HOLLY. How's Robert?

SAMANTHA. Oh, he's fine. He was just cast in a T.V. pilot. He plays the male ingenue and he's worried 'cause his hairline is receding.

KATE. Holly, I forgot to tell you. Rita's coming down from Vermont. She told Samantha she had a six-year itch to see us all again.

SAMANTHA. Muffy wrote me and said that Rita was so fat at her wedding that she couldn't even walk down the aisle. She had to be lowered to the altar by a crane. (Pause.) I don't believe that.

MUFFET. (Enters and joins the conversation immediately.) Rita was a rotunda. It was pathetic when the orchestra played (Begins to sing "More.") "More than the greatest . . ." She must sit in bed and eat bon-bons all day.

KATE. Cross-me-out, Muffet.

ALL. Cross-me-out?

MUFFET. Holly, pumpkin. (Kisses Holly and touches her hair.) I like your hair. Kate, did you really have to bring your attache case to the restaurant? Washington isn't that far away, I wish you got into town more often.

KATE. Muffet, I am a very important person now.

MUFFET. Don't you still sneak trashy novels?

HOLLY. I thought of you, Katie, when Jacqueline Suzanne died.

SAMANTHA. Did you know she had a buttocks enhancement? Eva La Gallienne told Robert when he was touring in *Cactus Flower*.

MUFFET. Samantha, only you would call an ass lift a "buttocks enhancement."

KATE. Who's Eva La Gallienne?

HOLLY. She wasn't our year. (Pause.)

MUFFET. Kate, how's Iki?

KATE. Well, he still loves me and Mother still asks about him. But . . .

MUFFET. And what's his name, the revolutionary. . . .

KATE. He left the bookstore and finished law school. He loves me, too. Muffet, this is adolescent. (Pause.) I've become a feminist.

HOLLY. Well, Alice Harwitch dropped out of medical school to form a lesbian rock band.

KATE. Cross-me-out! Does she sleep with women?

HOLLY. I guess so; they live together.

MUFFET. So what? I've taken a stand on birth control pills. I won't be manipulated by the pharmaceutical establishment.

HOLLY. Well, you're just not a masochist.

MUFFET. Oh, yes I am. I'm an insurance seminar hostess.

HOLLY. Muffy, why don't you go to graduate school?

10

MUFFET. Holly, not all of our fathers invented velveteen and can afford to send us to three graduate schools. Which master's are you on now; design, literature, or history. I can never keep track.

HOLLY. History.

MUFFET. Holly's embarrassed. You know I didn't mean it. You know you're my best. In fact, the one thing I miss in Hartford is having women friends. (Pause.) Did you read in the *Alumnae Magazine* that Nina Mandelbaum, now a landscape architect, got married twice to the same pediatric pulmonary specialist—they had a small wedding in Mexico and then a big religious ceremony in New York. Why Mexico? Do you think he went to medical school in . . .

ALL. Guadalajara!

HOLLY. My parents got a hold of that magazine and offered to fly me to Mexico if I thought he had any friends.

SAMANTHA. Did you know that Ca-Ca Phelps is teaching at Yale?

KATE. Stop!

HOLLY. She was one of those people who was with her horse the day of the Cambodia strike. Her real name was Caroline, right? So why does she still insist on calling herself Ca-Ca? Katie, wasn't Ca-Ca a friend of Leilah's?

KATE. I don't know. I really didn't know Leilah's friends very much. (Quick pause.) Do you ever think it's odd that none of us have children? I know we're the uncommon bell curve, but I still think it's odd. I can't decide if I want any.

MUFFET. Don't worry, Nina Mandelbaum will bud for all of us. There's a good genetic pool in pediatric pulmonary specialists. (Pause.) So, where's Rita?

KATE. I don't understand what Rita's doing. She's a smart girl.

MUFFET. So what. We're all smart girls.

HOLLY. It's a sexist society.

KATE. I don't have any trouble.

MUFFET. Kate, you don't know what trouble is. You were born in *Holiday Magazine*.

KATE. Really, what does Rita do all day?

HOLLY. Nothing.

KATE. Cross-me-out! (Rita enters. As Rita enters, she screams out each girl's name and kisses them. Finally, after going around, she kisses one girl twice.)

RYA. I just called Timmy.

11

HOLLY. He loves you.

RITA. No, he waits on me. I told you I always wanted a wife. He gives great head though. *(Pause.)* Kate, I'm really getting into women's things. I've been reading Doris Lessing, and I think when I get it together I'm going to have a great novel.

MUFFET. Rita, how are you getting it together doing nothing?

RITA. I'm getting into my head.

MUFFET. *(To Holly.)* Or Timmy's as the case may be.

RITA. Kate, I want to hear more about your law firm. I think we need more women lawyers and gynecologists. I won't go to mine anymore, 'cause it's a man. Besides, I heard he had a twin.

SAMANTHA. Oh, but Rita, you really should get a regular check-up.

RITA. Samantha, what's it like being married to Robert?

SAMANTHA. We're very happy.

RITA. I had to train Timmy. He's going to become my Leonard Woolf. Got a match, Muffet?

SAMANTHA. I was going to join a woman's group, but I couldn't decide what to take—macrame, bread-baking, or consciousness rap. *(Muffet lights herself. Rita and Holly on one match.)*

RITA. You know I saw a Bette Davis movie once, and the third one on the match dies. *(Puts arm around Holly.)* I didn't upset you, Holly, sweetheart?

HOLLY. No, it was planned on my part. I hate the women's movement. I sent an article to Ms. and this Noel Schwartz, sent me back a personal note saying, "I was a heretic to the sisterhood." And I ask you, is Holly Kaplan that different from Noel Schwartz? And she telling me about the sisterhood!

MUFFET. She has problems.

RITA. That's all right, Holly, when we're forty, we'll be incredible.

HOLLY. Rita, when we were graduating, you predicted by thirty. *(Pause. Rita tosses it off.)*

RITA. At least at college they appreciated us.

HOLLY. No they didn't. You were miserable. You hated it.

RITA. Well, at least we appreciated us.

MUFFET. I wish I was back there.

KATE. That says something about the quality of your life. *(Pause.)*

HOLLY. Kate already is incredible.

KATE. I don't think I appreciated women then, as much as I do now.

12

RITA. Kate, you just lacked imagination.

KATE. Now, Carter, for example, was incredibly bright.

MUFFET. Now, Carter, for example, was a catatonic. *(Pause.)*

SAMANTHA. Wanna make an announcement?

KATE. What?

SAMANTHA. I'm going to make an announcement. Like at Mount Holyoke. Now, let's all pretend we're at the dining room table. *(All the girls clink their glasses.)* Seniors and anybody who will be here for graduation: We need people to sing on Upper Lake, Commencement Eve. Singers are needed both on shore and in canoes. We will be singing show tunes, and—special attraction—"Love Look Away," from *Flower Drum Song*, and of course, the Alma Mater. Questions call . . .

ALL. Susie Friend! *(All the girls clap and laugh. Holly standing up agitated and not laughing.)*

MUFFET. Holly, what's wrong?

HOLLY. I can't stand to hear clinking glasses. It always makes me feel at any moment someone will come out in one of those pastel Modest living rooms and tell me to take my feet off the table, dear. *(They all clink their glasses.)*

END SCENE

ACT ONE

SCENE 2

Mrs. Plumm enters as soon as the girls finish clinking. She addresses her speech to the audience. The speech will serve as a transition from present to past. The girls are seated behind her for the speech. It is possible she has prepared visual arm movements with her oral recitation, that the girls mimic from behind.

MRS. PLUMM. I'm so glad I have this opportunity to welcome all you girls to tea this year. I'm Mrs. Plumm, housemother of North Stinson Hall. Dear, take your feet off the table. The tea fund was established by Lucy Valerie Bingsbee, class of 1906, after whom a Vermont orchid bog was recently dedicated by Governor Hoff as The Lucy Valerie Bingsbee Wildflower Sanctuary. I think

13

you girls will find tea here very comfy. I knew Lucy. I never cared for her much. I hope you all have a good year. There's a bit of a draft in here. If you have any questions or suggestions please knock at my door at any time except after 8:00 P.M. Although I'm not needed to sign overnight slips anymore, I'm still interested in all my girls. I thought before the end of tea, I'd read for you since I've always enjoyed oral interpretation. My friend, Dr. Ada Grudder, class of 1928 organized a theatre at the Christian Medical College in Nagpur, India. She begs me to visit, but I don't like long trips, and anyway it's so pleasant here, especially in the fall. Mmmmmmmmm. The cookies look lovely. What are they? Mmmmmmmmm. To those of you who are familiar with this reading class of 1850. To those of you who are familiar with this reading please bear with me. Contrary to rumor, I didn't know Emily.

(Laughs to herself.) She never accepted visitors.

The heart is the capital of the mind,
The mind is a single state,
heart and mind together make
A single continent.

One is the population
Numerous enough.
This ecstatic nation
Seek—it is yourself.

(She turns to girls at restaurant table.) Please take your tea-cups to the long table at the end of the room when you leave. Why doesn't someone close the window? There's still a draft in here. (Exit Mrs. Plumm.)

END SCENE

ACT ONE

SCENE 3

A college living room. Six years earlier.

MAN'S VOICE. On November 8, 1837, Miss Lyons Seminary was a place of high excitement. The building had been completed for

14

the school that was to do for young women what Yale and Harvard were doing for young men. The 80 students who enrolled the first year had the vitality and dedication of pioneers. (Same women as in first scene. They are joined by Leilah an attractive, but intense young woman. At one chair is also a very frail blond girl with alabaster skin, Carter. Also they are joined by Susie Friend, in tasteful Villager turquoise and engagement ring. The coffee table is set with tea-cups and milk and sugar, finger sandwiches and mayonnaise. The girls leave restaurant table and led by Susie Friend they stand up and perfunctorily sing grace. The attitude towards grace varies.)

ALL THE WOMEN. (Sing.)

Oh, the Lord is good to me,
and so I thank the Lord,
for giving me the things I need,
the sun and the rain, and the appleseed,
the Lord is good to me.

(Carter pulls out her chair. Susie Friend puts her hand on the chair.)

SUSIE. Oh, no wait. You can't sit down 'til Mrs. Plumm comes.

CARTER. Who's Mrs. Plumm?

SUSIE. She's our housemother.

RITA. She has syphilis. (Mrs. Plumm enters and sits behind a small tea service. Rita waves hello. The girls sit down in unison. Susie clinks her glass. All the girls follow in unison. Carter watches.)

SUSIE. (Stands up.) Announcement, Announcement! There'll be sherry and dinner to honor senior choral members at 1886 House. Also congratulations to Melissa Weex and Ca-Ca Phelps, new chairman of the Outing Club and Swan Song Soiree . . . (Every-one applauds. Rita and Kate applaud twice. Susie sits down. She takes a finger sandwich.)

SAMANTHA. Susie, would you care for mayonnaise?

SUSIE. I couldn't.

MUFFET. Holly could.

SUSIE. (Biting sandwich.) I love finger sandwiches. I'm Susie Friend. (Turns her head to Carter.)

MRS. PLUMM. Tea's ready, girls. (All the girls pick up their cups and form a line in front of Mrs. Plumm. First Susie, Kate, Rita Holly, then Samantha.)

HOLLY. I'll get it for you, Muffy. (Muffy and Carter are left on the couch. Mrs. Plumm pours first for Susie.)

15

SUSIE. Thank you, Mrs. Plumm. Mrs. Plumm is my favorite house-mother. And Earl Grey. I love Earl Grey.

MRS. PLUMM. Dear, would you care for some brandy?

SUSIE. No, thank you. (She turns to Kate.) Kate, do you want a ride to Cambridge this weekend? (Mrs. Plumm pours for Kate.)

KATE. No, I'm staying here to work.

MRS. PLUMM. Care for some honey, dear? (Leilah shakes her head. Kate and Susie walk back to the couch.)

SUSIE. Well, if you ever need a ride to Cambridge, I go every weekend. (They sit. Susie turns to Carter.) I used to date Wharton, but that was before I knew what I wanted. (Susie laughs at her own charm.)

CARTER. Yes. (Mrs. Plumm pours tea for Leilah. The girls take a slight notice of Carter.)

MRS. PLUMM. Leilah, aren't you going to stay with us for tea?

LEILAH. No, I have more reading to do. (Rita is in front of Mrs. Plumm.)

RITA. I'd like brandy and honey.

SUSIE. (To Carter.) I'm a senior. Head of freshmen in North Stimpson Hall and a psychology major. (Holly is in front of Mrs. Plumm.)

MRS. PLUMM. Holly, dear I told you I can't permit you to come to tea in pants. It's not fair to the other girls. I'll let you stay this afternoon. But, dear, let's not see it happen again. I know you can do it, you looked very pretty at "Gracious Living" once. (Samantha moves up to Mrs. Plumm and Holly. The girls at couch turn around to watch.)

SAMANTHA. Holly is very pretty in pink.

HOLLY. I'm sorry, Mrs. Plumm.

MRS. PLUMM. Dear, I just don't want our house to get a reputation.

CARTER. Yes. (All the girls are seated and served. Exit Mrs. Plumm. Girls look up at Carter.)

MUFFET. You're not sorry. You loved every minute of it.

KATE. Holly, I don't see what difference it makes to you. Why torment her? It's just a waste of time.

HOLLY. I don't have a skirt.

MUFFET. Oh, come off it, Holly. Your father invented "velveteen."

RITA. I think Holly is very pataphysical.

SUSIE. You know, you girls should really sit at Mrs. Plumm's

16

table more often. I see your group running to the end table after she walks into the room.

CARTER. Yes. (They look again.)

SUSIE. Well, she's very sweet!

SAMANTHA. (Sweetly to Carter.) She doesn't really have syphilis.

SUSIE. Especially you, Kate. Mrs. Plumm admires you. And you could make some new friends. I notice your nice friend, Leilah never comes to dinner anymore. At least try sitting with Mrs. Plumm at "Gracious."

SAMANTHA. (Smiles to Carter.) Susie, she doesn't know what "Gracious Living" is.

SUSIE. Don't call a freshman "she." It's alienating. I learned that in psychology.

HOLLY. I think "Gracious" is a cultural excess. When I get out of here, I'm never going to have dinner by candlelight in the wilderness with 38 girls in hostess gowns. Unless, of course, I train for Amazon guerrilla warfare at the Junior League. Also I can't stomach the way Mrs. Plumm's neck shakes when she pours the sherry. (The girls all shake their necks.)

SUSIE. Holly, have you ever been to "Gracious" at Smith? Ours is much more homey. I'm glad I didn't go there to college. Smith's much too social.

KATE. Not as much as Vassar. I applied there as a safety school.

SAMANTHA. Well, Vassar's just a cut above Connecticut College.

HOLLY. I thought Conn. was a good school.

MUFFET. If you like the Coast Guard.

KATE. Aren't Wellesley and Bryn Mawr the most academic?

SAMANTHA. Well, Bryn Mawr, of course. But Wellesley lacks imagination. They just marry Harvard and M.I.T.

HOLLY. Hands up! Who here got into Radcliffe? (No hands go up.)

MRS. PLUMM. (Appearing briefly.) Hands up! Who wants dessert? (No hands go up.)

KATE. Gross-me-out! It's last night's jelly rolls.

CARTER. Yes.

MUFFET. Don't be embarrassed, Holly. You can take them up to your room. (Clinking glass noise is heard.)

GIRL'S VOICE. (Announces.) Male Long Distance, Male L.D. for

17

Susie Friend. (*Susie throws her napkin on the table and runs out of the room singing. "Oh, the Lord is good to me."*)

RITA. Hi, I'm Susie Friend. I love finger sandwiches. Earl Grey, and Cambridge. I'm a psychology major, head of freshmen in North Stimson Hall, and I wax my legs. I'd let a Harvard man, especially from the Business or Law Schools violate my body for three hours; Princeton, for two hours and fifty minutes, because you have to take a bus and a train to get there; Yale, for two hours and forty-five minutes because my Dad went there and it makes me feel guilty; Dartmouth, for two hours and thirty minutes because it takes them time to warm up; Columbia, I just don't know, because of the radical politics and the neighborhood. I learned that in psychology. Now, if I could have a Wellesley girl, or Mrs. Plumm, that would be different.

KATE. Rita, you're so adolescent.

MUFFET. Remember when Rita made Rorschach tests with her menstrual blood to summon back Edward Munch.

HOLLY. Rita, you couldn't go out with a nice boy from Amherst?

MUFFET. It was her interdepartmental project.

RITA. I thought it was very pataphysical.

CARTER. Yes.

SAMANTHA. But, Rita, you're still on the D.A.R. Scholarship.

KATE. Uch, Rita, gross-me-out!

RITA. I never let my economic background deter me.

SAMANTHA. Sometimes I wish I'd never left the Midwest.

MUFFET. Oh, Rita, you've upset her.

RITA. (*Arm around Samantha's chair.*) Samantha, pumpkin, why don't you make an announcement? (*Puts spoon in Samantha's hand and moves glass toward her.*) It'll make you feel better.

SAMANTHA. Rita, I've been here almost four years, and I've never made an announcement.

RITA. Well, it always makes Susie Friend feel better.

SAMANTHA. We don't belong to any committees.

HOLLY. Kate's in Phi Beta Kappa.

MUFFET. Holly, you do it. They'll never expect it from you. (*Holly, Kate, Samantha, Rita, Muffet clink their glasses. Holly stands up.*)

HOLLY. Um. Susie Friend has requested a toast. (*Holly, Kate, Samantha, Muffet immediately stand up and toast their tea-cups. Carter stares blankly.*)

18

HOLLY, KATE, SAMANTHA, RITA, MUFFET. (*All sing.*) *
Tired of books and boring classes
Drop your books, fill up your glasses
Drink, the girls who think
Of mixing Greek and Latin
With a cool Manhattan

(*Susie Friend rushes back to the living room and toasts her tea-cup. Mrs. Plumm enters, toasts and sings.*)
EVERYONE.

And Amherst has its Heidelberg's
And then there's Mory's down at Yale
And when those Harvard boys
Drink to College joys
It's dull you must agree
Adding lemon to your tea.

Smith may have their Ice Tea Hours
We prefer our whiskey sour.
Drink and never think
About tomorrow tonight.

(*They all clink each other's tea-cup. The girls take their napkins and begin to exit.*)

SUSIE. There'll be a rule book test for all freshmen tonight in the living room after "Gracious." Mrs. Plumm has promised to bring sherry.

CARTER. Who's Sherry? (*Everyone does a double take look at Carter. The girls begin to leave the living room. Each girl, as she exits, folds her napkin and puts it into a box. Carter struggles behind.*)

SAMANTHA. (*Watching Carter.*) Susie, she doesn't know where to put her napkin.

SUSIE. Don't call a freshman "she." It's alienating. I learned that in psychology. Hi, what's your name?

CARTER. Carter.

SUSIE. Well, Carter, we each have a separate napkin cubby compartment. We take them out and put them back after each meal. Watch Kate fold her napkin. Your napkin, Carter, is washed and pressed every Wednesday and Sunday in time for "Gracious."

* See note on copyright page concerning music for this song.

19

Now, your box is right to the left as you enter the dining room. (Takes Carter's napkin, folds it, and puts it away in the napkin cubbyhole.) And Carter if you have any questions or you just want to talk about psychology, knock on my door. It has the *Snoopy* calendar on it. I got the calendar as a present from Kenny at Harvard. I used to date Wharton but that was before I knew what I wanted. (She winks at Carter.) Good-night, oh, and Carter. I would avoid Rita. I don't know what the D.A.R. was thinking of. (Blows her a kiss and exits. Carter is left sitting, looking at her napkin.)

END SCENE

ACT ONE

SCENE 4

MAN'S VOICE. The real problem for many educated women is the difficulty they have in recognizing whether they have been a success. . . . Women will be part-time mothers, part-time workers, part-time cooks, and part-time intellectuals. When scholars point out that even the best cooks have been men, the proper answer is, "But what man has been not only the second best cook, but the third best parent, the seventh best typist, and the tenth best community leader?" Just like the pot of honey that kept renewing itself, an educated woman's capacity for giving is not exhausted but stimulated by demands. (Muffet is reading the college catalog. Carter is silent and sits on the floor. Suddenly Muffet throws the book down.)

MUFFET. I am so tired. Why doesn't someone just take me away from all this? Did you ever notice how walking into Samantha's room is like walking into a clean sheet? She and Susie Friend celebrate Piglet's birthday. Katie says you're very bright. Did I tell you what happened in Chip Knowles' women's history class today? Do you know Chip Knowles? He always wears chamomile shirts and *Topsiders* from L.L. Bean. You can never find anything you want in those L.L. Bean catalogues. So I just order a decoy duck every year. It makes me feel waspy. Chip's wife Libby, graduated first in her class from Vassar. When I told Chip I was a senior and didn't know what I'd be doing next year, Chip told me that Libby doesn't

20

really spend the day mopping and catching tadpoles with Chip, Jr. She may be mopping with her hands but with her mind she's relying on the water imagery in the Faerie Queen. Anyway, I thought women's history would be a gut and it wouldn't look as obvious on my record as "Marriage and the Family." As it turns out, this class isn't half bad. We read all the basics; the womb-penis inner and outer space nonsense. The Feminine Mystique, Sexual Politics, Mabel Dodge's Diary. Chip Knowles says women's history is relevant. Do you think women will lose their relevancy in five years? Like "Car 54, Where Are You?" Anyway, after two months of reading about suffragettes and courageous choices, this French dish comes into class dressed in a tight turtleneck and skirt. And you know how for seminar breaks everyone brings in graham crackers, well this chick brings in home made petit-fours. And she stands in front of the class and tells us she has not prepared her report on Rosie the Riveter because, "You girls are wasting your time. You should do more avec what you have down here— (Muffet points to her breasts.) then avec what you have up here." (Muffet points to her head.) And in less than five seconds the class is giving her a standing ovation, everyone is applauding. Except Holly and Rita, who grabbed the petit-fours, and ran out of the room in protest. I didn't do anything. I felt so confused. I mean this chick is an obvious imbecile. But I didn't think she was entirely wrong either. I guess the truth is men are very important to me. Well, not more important than you and Holly and Samantha. Well, not always, pumpkin. Sometimes I know who I am when I feel attractive. Other times it makes me feel very shallow like I'm not Rosie the Riveter. I suppose this isn't a very impressive sentiment, but I would really like to meet my prince. Even a few princes. And I wouldn't give up being a person. I'd still remember all the Art History dates. I just don't know why suddenly I'm supposed to know what I want to do. I guess I should think about sleeping with someone tonight to pass the time. Except it's always creepy in the morning. Rita doesn't think so. But she's promiscuous. I'm not promiscuous. I just hate going to bed alone. Maybe sometime you can sleep on my floor. It's funny, you're a freshman and we're seniors. I'm not even worried about next year. I just have to make sure something happens to me. (Enter Samantha. She is obviously excited.)

SAMANTHA. Oh, hi Carter. (Excited.) Muffet, I'm in love.

21

MUFFET. With whom?
 SAMANTHA. Robert Cabe. I met him last night and I thought this is the one I want. He's handsome and talented, and he's better than me and he'll love me. You'll see. I want to be his audience, and have my picture behind him, in my long tartan kilt in the Times Arts and Leisure Section.
 MUFFET. That's nice Samantha. Samantha, how come I haven't met my Heathcliff yet?
 SAMANTHA. Oh, Muffy, you wouldn't want him. They never settle down. Her soul wandered the moors for years. There's no security in that. You want someone who's good for you.
 MUFFET. Maybe. (Pause.) Actually, I don't mind being alone. I like being strong. Like Rosie the Riveter.
 SAMANTHA. I know, Muff. You're just more capable than me. Wanna go for a drive?
 MUFFET. (Begins to leave the room.) Sure. (Pause.) Bye, bye, Carter.
 SAMANTHA. Bye, Carter.
 MUFFET. Oh, Carter, I should be back in about an hour or so, so why don't you come up then and we'll talk some more. (Exit Muffet and Samantha.)

END SCENE

ACT ONE

SCENE 5

Carter seated alone. Begins to ironically mime dance to the male voice. By the time she gets to "steadiness and gaiety," she sits down exhausted.

MAN'S VOICE. Although the attitude of society to education for women has changed in the last century and a quarter, the intellectual curiosity, hard work, and the spirit of adventure are still characteristic of Mount Holyoke. Mary Lyon, sending her early students out across the plains and seas as teachers and missionaries said, "Go where no one else will go. Do what no one else will

do." Some of her 25,000 "daughters" have blazed new trails, like Frances Perkins, Secretary of Labor under President Roosevelt. Others found adventure near at hand. Emily Dickinson went home. Today thousands of alumnae and students are serving their families and their communities with generosity and imagination, leading lives that enrich those they touch, ready to meet the unknown with steadiness and gaiety. (Carter seated on the floor. Enter Susie Friend holding a note.)

SUSIE. Hi, Carter. I have a message from your elf. You see, every freshman has a junior sister and a secret senior elf to help them through. That's right, it's your elf who's been leaving candy in your mail and napkin boxes and all the other treats, and she'll fix you up on the weekend and that's real neat. It's fun to see the girls at tea and Milk 'n Crackers too, and try and try to guess which one belongs to you. Don't you love Mrs. Plumm?? Fall teas are such fun when she brings apricot brandy. Mmmmmmmmmmm real yum! But Milk 'n Crackers is neat too. Every night the kitchen help leaves out crackers, milk, peanut butter, and sometimes fluff for you. You should come sometime, Carter. It's a real study break for me from my thesis on Claude Levi Strauss. I'm just a messenger here and I can't say who your elf is. But I think she's found you a male caller, hip horrah! See you later. (Susie bands Carter the note and exits. Carter stares blankly at the envelope. She opens it, and Hershey kisses fall out. Carter reads the note.)

CARTER.

For our Carter
 No one's smarter
 Your elf has a surprise
 so open your eyes
 Kanga and Roo
 have a Yale blue for you.
 (She looks up.)
 A terrific date
 He can't wait
 We'll double at the game
 but I won't be to blame
 if he's a little odd
 or a bit of a scrod
 (She looks back at Susie Friend.)

Hair by Thursday must be washed for the trip

It wouldn't hurt to give the split ends a snip
 Tonight's the night it must be done
 I'm sudsing with Ca-Ca and Jill in number one

Some Hershey kisses and best wishes
 Bring a hot water bottle
 See you at Milk 'n Crackers

Lovens,
 Your elf

(*Carter puts down letter.*) Cross—me—out!

END SCENE

ACT ONE

SCENE 6

MAN'S VOICE. To profit most fully from the undergraduate curriculum, a student should examine for herself not only the nature of her academic interest, but also her conception of the good life and the kind of community she would like to fashion. (*Kate lies reading on a bed. She throws down the book she is reading and takes out another one.*)

KATE. (*Reading.*) "She remembered the way Melissa Blaine with her perfect cameo face had smiled up at Lance. 'Yes,' she said. 'I'm sure you've had most of the desirable women in the city, but I don't want to be among them.' Then, I think it's time I changed your mind, Lance said. Suddenly Lance's hand slid to the back of her gown. With one strong arm he pinned her to his chest so that try as she might, she could not push him away. He deftly unfastened the buttons of her gown, as if he had had long practice in performing such actions. "What are you doing? I'm not one of your strumpets!" (*Leilah knocks on the door. Like Kate she is very attractive. But as opposed to Kate, who is obviously quite confident, Leilah prefers to walk with her head down.*)

LEILAH. Kate? You're busy.
 KATE. I was just reading "The Genealogy of Morals."

24

LEILAH. How was dinner?

KATE. Leilah, I don't understand why you never come. Even Susie Friend has been asking for you.

LEILAH. I came in to get the Nietzsche assignment.

KATE. Leilah, you don't think I'm a good person do you?

LEILAH. Kate, you're very good.

KATE. Then why don't you ever come in here just to visit instead of always asking for the assignment? Leilah, we roomed together for three years and now I never see you anymore. You're angry about last year in Greece. Aren't you?

LEILAH. That wasn't your fault.

KATE. I felt badly for you when both Iki and Thomas fell in love with me. Leilah, sometimes I think I should apologize to you and other times I don't know exactly what I should apologize for. I haven't done anything deliberately to hurt you. I want us to stay friends.

LEILAH. I know.

KATE. What are you going to do next year? I don't know what's going to happen if I don't get into Law School.

LEILAH. Kate, you're not supposed to hear until April; this is only November.

KATE. Well, I'm Phi Beta Kappa, but I'm worried about my Law Boards. (*Pause.*) Oh, Leah, pumpkin, don't worry. You'll be Phi Bet by June, in time for graduation. Just think you could be Muffet, or Samantha, or God forbid, Rita. What are they going to do with their lives? At least you and I aren't limited.

LEILAH. Did I tell you I applied to anthropology graduate school?

KATE. Why aren't you continuing in philosophy?

LEILAH. I really like anthropology. I want to go to small towns in Iraq. Look, I've made a list of Mesopotamia jokes.

KATE. Leilah, things aren't going to be better for you in Iraq. You don't have to make yourself exotic. You're a smart, pretty, girl. And anyway, if you can't leave your room in South Hadley, how are you going to get along in Iraq?

LEILAH. Just fine. Kate, what's the Nietzsche assignment? I have more reading to do.

KATE. You always have more reading to do. (*Leilah begins to move away.*) I'm sorry. Let's talk about something else. Like when we were roommates, okay? Leilah, what do you know about clitoral orgasms?

25

LEILAH. Well, my gentleman friend, Mr. Peterson, says they're better than others.

KATE. I wonder if I've had any.

LEILAH. Kate, I'm sure you have. It's a fad.

KATE. Well, I never thought I had a problem.

LEILAH. Why don't you ask Rita?

KATE. Rita's fucked up. *(They laugh.)* Leilah, are you leaving philosophy because I'm Phi Bet and you're not? That's stupid. The department likes you as much as me.

LEILAH. Kate, I know you're trying but . . . I don't know. I just want to go away. I don't want to have to think about this place anymore. Kate, do you have the assignment?

KATE. Read the last two chapters in the "Genealogy of Morals." *(Pause.)* Look, Leilah, I'm sorry. I really am. But it's not my fault. You're always predisposed against me.

LEILAH. Kate, are you going to Milk and Crackers? I'll see you later.

KATE. Leilah, did you know Holly used to pick up men on the Yale green when she was a sophomore? She had clitoral orgasms. But that was a long time ago.

LEILAH. Maybe that's why she gets on with Rita. They have that in common.

KATE. Leilah, that's nasty.

LEILAH. *(Strongly.)* We all have hidden potential, Kate. *(Goes to exit.)* Bye Katie.

KATE. I'm going to ask Carter to join us for Milk and Crackers. I think she's very bright. It's been a long time since we've had someone new to talk to in this house, around three years. *(Trusted, Kate goes back to her book.)* "I'm sorry," Lance said after a moment. "I suppose I shouldn't have done that. But you were asking for it. You wanted it. And you enjoyed every second of it."

END SCENE

ACT ONE

SCENE 7

Holly filling a diaphragm with orthocreme. Leilah and Rita are walking by, and as soon as they see Holly, they stop and watch.

26

MAN'S VOICE. Am I saying that anatomy is destiny? No, it is not destiny. Providing a setting in which these subtle constraints may be overcome is particularly the mission of a college for women.

RITA. Holly, you've got enough orthocreme in there to sleep with the entire SS Constitution.

HOLLY. The instructions say two teaspoonfuls, so I thought I'd see what it's like with a little extra. I don't want to bud. *(Pause.)* Now that I have one of these things, whenever I see a boy with a yarmulke, I think he has a diaphragm on his head. *(Pause.)* I shouldn't have said that. I'll be struck down by a burning bush.

LEILAH. Who are you going to use this thing with?

HOLLY. I don't know. I got it 'cause it made me feel grown up. I could tell my friends stories about the day I got my diaphragm. Doesn't matter. In fact, I hate being mounted.

RITA. Holly, pumpkin, life doesn't really offer that many pleasures that you can go around avoiding the obvious ones.

HOLLY. What kind of pleasure? There's someone on top of you sweating and pushing and you're lying there pretending this is wonderful. That's not wonderful. That's masochistic. RITA. But it can be your conquest, pumpkin.

LEILAH. This is distorted. Rita, you are manipulative.

RITA. Leilah, I'm not manipulative. Our entire being is programmed for male approval. Now, I, on the other hand, want abandonment. I want to do it with everything: dogs, cats, trees, bushes, ashtrays, children, light bulbs, shoe boxes . . .

LEILAH. Rita, don't you want some attachment? Some love?

RITA. From a cock?

LEILAH. Then why are you with Clark?

RITA. He's a wonderful lover.

LEILAH. Clark's a homosexual.

RITA. He's creative. I've had enough of those macho types. Honestly, after I slept with Jack Hall he shook my hand and said thank you, and Chip Knowles came like a Pop Tart.

HOLLY. Really. Chip Knowles. I guess Libby was busy with the Faerie Queen.

LEILAH. But Rita, wouldn't you want the basis of a relationship to be some mutual understanding or . . .

RITA. *(Cuts her off.)* Leilah, you're beautiful. You can.

LEILAH. Rita, you're more beautiful than I am.

27

RITA. (Rita demonstrates with her hand the vertical and horizontal qualities of the buildings and roads. At "shopping malls" she shows a parallel vertical with both hands.) Listen, Leilah, this entire society is based on cocks— The New York Times, Walter Cronkite, all the building and roads, the cities, philosophy, government, history, religion, shopping malls, everything I can name is male. When I see things this way, it becomes obvious that it's very easy to feel alienated and alone for the simple reason that I've never been included because I came into the world without a penis. Therefore it is my duty to take advantage. Did I ever tell you about the time I left Johnny Cabot lying there after I'd had an orgasm and he hadn't. It was hilarious. And anyway, Leilah, no one will ever do for me what they'll do for you, or Kate, or even Samantha. So I have to take advantage. In my case it's a moral imperative. I've got to go now, I'm auditioning for Clark— He's directing a production of "Another Part of the Forest." (She realizes Forest is another vertical.) Forest, trees, logs, pinecones, elks . . . (Exit Rita.)

HOLLY. I think she's wrong about the shopping malls. (Pause.) Sometimes I think we have too much external and too little internal input. It's disturbing having sympathy with everyone's point of view. I guess I better put "thing" away in its shell.

LEILAH. Do you know the first time I ever really understood about diaphragms or sex was from reading *The Group*. I remember when I was twelve taking it down from my parents' library shelf and rereading the passages about Dottie leaving her diaphragm on Washington Square. It was quite titillating. And my parents didn't mind; they were happy I showed an early interest in Seven-Sister schools.

HOLLY. Lei, I want to tell you something but I was embarrassed to in front of Rita.

LEILAH. How can you be embarrassed in front of Rita, she's so embarrassing?

HOLLY. I called someone in Minneapolis today and hung up. I hung up twice.

LEILAH. Who was it?

HOLLY. A doctor I met with Muffet last summer. I thought I'd visit him over Christmas vacation. That's really why I bought "thing" here. He was very responsive on the phone. He said hello before I hung up.

LEILAH. Maybe you shouldn't see a friend of Muffet's.

28

HOLLY. Muffet doesn't know him either. We just met him once at a museum. I could tell he liked me. He smiled a lot at my legs. I'm very attractive from the kneecap to the ankle.

LEILAH. I guess I'm going to stay with my gentleman friend Mr. Peterson over vacation. Katie thinks he's boring.

HOLLY. He's not boring. See, I didn't want to talk to Minneapolis because I was afraid I'd start giggling and be self-effacing and my voice would screech. And then I'd start wishing I was Kate or Rita.

LEILAH. Holly, you can't keep wishing you're someone else. You'll be smothered.

HOLLY. Sometimes I want to clean up my desk and go out and say, respect me, I'm a respectable grownup, and other times I just want to jump into a paper bag and shake and bake myself to death.

SAMANTHA and SUSIE. (Come through the room singing.)

Happy birdle dirdle toodle yoodle doodle

Happy birdle dirdle toodle yoodle doodle

Happy birdle dirdle dear Piglet

Happy Birdle dirdle to you.

SUSIE. Make a wish.

SAMANTHA. Isn't he cute? (They run out giggling. Leilah and Holly watch them. Leilah turns to Holly.)

LEILAH. We could shake and bake Piglet.

END SCENE

ACT ONE

SCENE 8

Judy Collins' record is heard.* Holly, Samantha, Kate. They are drinking sherry. It is very late.

SAMANTHA. (Going to record player.) This was my favorite song in high school. My senior year I sent it to a boy who was hitch-hiking cross country. I printed it on the back of a Vermeer

* See Special Note on copyright page.

29

postcard from the Chicago Art Institute. It was the only time I've ever written without capitals or punctuation. (Pause.) I also liked the Dave Clark Five a lot in ninth grade. I thought I could marry one of them cause they were more accessible than the Beatles. KATE. My best was Leonard Cohen. When I was in high school, I wanted to go down like Suzanne with the garbage and the sea-weed. Then I heard he had a thing with Joni Mitchell and there's only so much wisfulness one can stomach. (Samantha continues to sing song. Enter Rita excited and triumphant.)

RITA. I've tasted my menstrual blood.

KATE. Uch, Rita, gross-me-out.

RITA. Germaine Greer says the test of a truly liberated woman is tasting her menstrual blood.

KATE. Rita, that's drivel.

SAMANTHA. She also says women shouldn't wear underwear.

RITA. Who told you that?

SAMANTHA. Robert.

RITA. Robert. Robert, what does he know about it? I think all men should be forced to menstruate—Robert S. MacNamara, Baba Ram-Das, John Glenn—all of them except James Taylor, we'll spare him. But the rest of them should be forced to answer phones on a white nautical receptionist chair with a cotton lollipop stuck up their crotch.

SAMANTHA. Why spare James Taylor?

HOLLY. (Looks at her surprised.) Samantha!

SAMANTHA. Robert says I'm a closet wit. (She giggles.)

RITA. The only problem with menstruation for men is that some sensitive schmuck would write about it for *The Pillage Voice* and he would become the new expert on women's inner life. Dr. David Reuben, taking the time out to menstruate over the July Fourth Weekend, has concluded that "women are so much closer to the universe because they menstruate and therefore they seek out lemon freshened borax, hair spray and other womb related items." (Pause.) And that's why I think we need to talk about masturbation.

KATE. Rita, gross-me out!!

HOLLY. Rita, have you ever told the D.A.R. how you spend your time here?

KATE. (Slightly interested.) Do you really masturbate?

RITA. I know Susie Friend does. She does it in front of her

30

father's picture from *The New York Times* when he was made Vice President of American Canco.

SAMANTHA. (Politely changing the subject.) Anyone want some corn nuts? My mom just sent them from Naperville. You can't get corn nuts east of the Mississippi. (Offers nuts.)

KATE. I don't think Germaine Greer has thought this out properly. Know what I think the ideal society would be. If all women had communal apartments—not poured concrete socialist apartments—I mean an estate and everyone worked so child-care was rotated and the men came to visit on the weekends and were very nice and charming, bright—all those things—but they left on Mondays.

HOLLY. Katie, that's just what it's like here.

KATE. Well, except my plan doesn't get boring. The men who arrive are Arabian millionaires, poets, lumberjacks. Not corporate lawyers, or M.B.A.'s.

HOLLY. Katie, you're a snot rag.

RITA. Kate just grew up in *Holiday Magazine*.

SAMANTHA. I couldn't live in a society like that. I guess I'm not as strong as you, Kate.

RITA. Don't worry, Samantha, pumpkin. You're a closet wit.

HOLLY. I want-to be divorced and living with two children on Central Park West.

KATE. Holly, don't you want to fall in love? You don't have to get married, but it would be nice to have a passion.

HOLLY. Yes, except if I fall in love it would be because I thought someone was better than me. And if I really thought someone was better than me, I'd give them everything and I'd hate them for my living through them.

KATE. You don't really expect to live through someone else, do you?

HOLLY. I think I'd like to very much.

KATE. Piffle, Holly. You're too diffuse. You need to concentrate your efforts.

RITA. Want to play a game?

KATE. Rita it's too late in the night for tampon bobbing.

RITA. This is a nice game for nice girls. (Rita gathers the girls together. Pause.) Let's each take a turn and say if we could marry any one of us who it would be.

SAMANTHA. I'm already pinned.

RITA. That doesn't count. You can only select from our own

31

uncommon pool. Holly, stop edging under the bed. (Pause.) I'd marry Samantha cause she'd make the best wife and in a matrimonial situation I could admire her the longest.

SAMANTHA. Would you really marry me?

RITA. Samantha, you're the perfect woman.

SAMANTHA. Rita, now I feel really badly cause I wouldn't have picked you and it would have been nice if everything worked out. (Pause.) This is very difficult 'cause it would be interesting to live with Rita, and Kate probably has the best future.

HOLLY. How 'bout Susie Friend?

SAMANTHA. You don't marry a girl like that. Too many committee meetings.. She'd never be home. (Pause.) Holly, you're sweet and funny but I couldn't support you and there would be a problem at the club. I guess I would marry Muffet cause she could get on with the outside world and Piglet wouldn't drive her crazy. Also, Muffet's glamorous, but she doesn't scare me.

HOLLY. I guess I would be most comfortable being married to Leilah or Rita. I'd never feel that I have to impress them. But when you get right down to it, I'd want to marry Katie. I would consider living through your accomplishments, Katie, and besides I'm sure if we got married my parents would approve and one of us would get our picture in the Sunday Times. (They laugh.)

SAMANTHA. How 'bout you, Kate? Who would you marry?

KATE. I don't know.

HOLLY. You don't have to marry me, Katie. I understand. Maybe you have to settle your career first.

KATE. I guess I never thought about marrying any of you.

RITA. Kate, for a smart woman you have a stunted imagination.

KATE. Well, if I married one of us I would probably have to be the main income source. That's excluding the possibility of trust funds. So if I was supporting someone I guess I would want to marry Carter.

HOLLY. Carter. Gross-me-out! (Pause and giggles.) I'm sorry. That wasn't very nice. I'm sure you'll be very happy together.

KATE. Carter is very bright. And if I'm going to be a boring lawyer then I'd want to be married to someone who would stay home and have an imagination. Anyway, Carter would need me. Holly, I would consider you cause you're such a good person. But then that would make me feel a little chilly.

RITA. I think we should celebrate.

32

SAMANTHA. What?

RITA. That none of our marriage proposals have been reciprocated. SAMANTHA. We don't know. Maybe Muffy would want to marry me.

HOLLY. No. I think if we marry, we'll have to marry outside of each other. Probably men.

RITA. Muffy's out with pink pants. She knows she has to marry a man.

SAMANTHA. I know a great song we could celebrate with and dance to. (She goes to record player and puts on a popular record celebrating love and marriage. The girls sing as soon as they hear it. They get up to begin dancing.)

KATE. Do you think Germaine Greer remembers the night she danced with her best friends in a women's dormitory at Cambridge?

RITA. No, she was probably into dating and make-up. (The girls are dancing and laughing.)

HOLLY. Kate, you're a good dancer.

KATE. I know I should give up law and become a rock star.

SAMANTHA. Want to see the way Robert dances? (She demonstrates. They laugh.) It's pretty gross-me-out. (Enter Carter who stares at them.)

CARTER. I came in to tell you I've decided what I want.

I want to put Wittgenstein on film.

SAMANTHA. That's nice, Carter. Know what? (She is giggling.) We just all proposed to each other. And Kate said she'd want to marry you. Carter, Kate is really the best catch.

KATE. It was all hypothetical.

SAMANTHA. Carter, want to dance?

HOLLY. Don't you think Kate would make a great rock star? KATE. Carter, dance with us. Just think how odd this would look if Susie Friend walked in. (Carter begins to join them slowly. Her dancing is noticeably different from the other girls. A dying swan would be fitting. They continue to dance and laugh.)

RITA. (Over singing.) Know what? I think when we're 25 we're going to be pretty fucking incredible. All right, I'll give us another five years for emotional and career development. When we're 30 we're going to be pretty fucking amazing. (Pause.) Carter, don't worry. You're younger so you have 13 years. (They continue to

33

dance and sing in a line. They move towards the back of the room. Holly goes to a phone in the corner. The girls dancing silhouette Holly from behind.)

HOLLY. Operator, could you connect me with a Dr. Mark Silverstein in Minneapolis? (She dials.) Hello, is this Dr. Silverstein? Oh, this is his answering service. Hi! A message. (Pause.) Respect me. I'm a respectable grown up. Oh, my name is Simone de Beauvoir and I should be back in an hour. (Holly hangs up and puts her feet up on the table as Mrs. Plumm enters. She is walking thru clinking a glass as if preparing to make an announcement. She stops at Holly.)

MRS. PLUMM. Holly, dear, take your feet off the furniture. (Exit Mrs. Plumm. Holly puts her foot back up and sits quietly while the music swells and girls continue to dance behind her.)

END ACT ONE

34

ACT TWO

SCENE 1

Holly, Kate, Muffet, Samantha, Leilab, Susie, Rita, sing. Carter holds pitch pipe. The girls are standing for their performance.

ALL. Mildred, Maud and Mabel were sitting at their table.*
Down at the Taft Hotel.
Working on a plan to
Catch themselves a man to
Brighten up their lives a spell.

MUFFET. (Whispers to her friends.) I slept with a Whiffenpool at the Taft Hotel.

ALL. (Sing.)

In their thirty years of proms,
Never once had they had qualms,
That they could fail to satisfy their craven
Nor ever seemed to doubt it's not reckless to hold out
For a son of Old New Haven.

RITA. (Whispers.) These women should have been in therapy.

KATE. (Sings.)

And as they downed their pousse cafe
(Whispers.) I've been here four years and I still don't know what
pousse cafe is.

ALL. (Sing.)

The girls were heard to softly say.

SUSIE. (Speaks.) I want to welcome all you fathers to Father-Daughter weekend. You Dads look younger every year.

SAMANTHA. Hi, Daddy!

* See note on copyright page concerning music for this song.

35

70

71

72

73

74

75

76

77

78

79

80

81

82

83

84

85

86

87

88

89

90

91

92

93

94

95

96

97

98

99

100

101

102

103

104

105

106

107

108

109

110

111

112

113

114

115

116

117

118

119

120

121

122

123

124

125

126

127

128

129

130

131

132

133

134

135

136

137

138

139

140

141

142

143

144

145

146

147

148

149

150

151

152

153

154

155

156

157

158

159

160

161

162

163

164

165

166

167

168

169

170

171

172

173

174

175

176

177

178

179

180

181

182

183

184

185

186

187

188

189

190

191

192

193

194

195

196

197

198

199

200

201

202

203

204

205

206

207

208

209

210

211

212

213

214

215

216

217

218

219

220

221

222

223

224

225

226

227

228

229

230

231

232

233

234

235

236

237

238

239

240

241

242

243

244

245

246

247

248

249

250

251

252

253

254

255

256

257

258

259

260

261

262

263

264

265

266

267

268

269

270

271

272

273

274

275

276

277

278

279

280

281

282

283

284

285

286

287

288

289

290

291

292

293

294

295

296

297

298

299

300

301

302

303

304

305

306

307

308

309

310

311

312

313

314

315

316

317

318

319

320

321

322

323

324

325

326

327

328

329

330

331

332

333

334

335

336

337

338

339

340

341

342

343

344

345

346

347

348

349

350

351

352

353

354

355

356

357

358

359

360

361

362

363

364

365

366

367

368

369

370

371

372

373

374

375

376

377

378

379

380

381

382

383

384

385

386

387

388

389

390

391

392

393

394

395

396

397

398

399

400

401

402

403

404

405

406

407

408

409

410

411

412

413

414

415

416

417

418

419

420

421

422

423

424

425

426

427

428

429

430

431

432

433

434

435

436

437

438

439

440

441

442

443

444

445

446

447

448

449

450

451

452

453

454

455

456

457

458

459

460

461

462

463

464

465

466

467

468

469

470

471

472

473

474

475

476

477

478

479

480

481

482

483

484

485

486

487

488

489

490

491

492

493

494

495

496

497

498

499

500

501

502

503

504

505

506

507

508

509

510

511

512

513

514

515

516

517

518

519

520

521

522

523

524

525

526

527

528

529

530

531

532

533

534

535

536

537

538

539

540

541

542

543

544

545

546

547

548

549

550

551

552

553

554

555

556

557

558

559

560

561

562

563

564

565

566

567

568

569

570

571

572

573

574

575

576

577

578

579

580

581

582

583

584

585

586

587

588

589

590

591

592

593

594

595

596

597

598

599

600

601

602

603

604

605

606

607

608

609

610

611

612

613

614

615

616

617

618

619

620

621

622

623

624

625

626

627

628

629

630

631

632

633

634

635

636

637

638

639

640

641

642

643

644

645

646

647

648

649

650

651

652

653

654

655

656

657

658

659

660

661

662

663

664

665

666

667

668

669

670

671

672

673

674

675

676

677

678

679

680

681

682

683

684

685

686

687

688

689

690

691

692

693

694

695

696

697

698

699

700

701

702

703

704

705

706

707

708

709

710

711

712

713

714

715

716

717

718

719

720

721

722

723

724

725

726

727

728

729

730

731

732

733

734

735

736

737

738

739

740

741

742

743

744

745

746

747

748

749

750

751

752

753

754

755

756

757

758

759

760

761

762

763

764

765

766

767

768

769

770

771

772

773

774

775

776

777

778

779

780

781

782

783

784

785

786

787

788

789

790

791

792

793

794

795

796

797

798

799

800

801

802

803

804

805

806

807

808

809

810

811

812

813

814

815

816

817

818

819

820

821

822

823

824

825

826

827

828

829

830

831

832

833

834

835

836

837

838

839

840

841

842

843

844

845

846

847

848

849

850

851

852

853

854

855

856

857

858

859

860

861

862

863

864

865

866

867

868

869

870

871

872

873

874

875

876

877

878

879

880

881

882

883

884

885

886

887

888

889

890

891

892

893

894

895

896

897

898

899

900

901

902

903

904

905

906

907

908

909

910

911

912

913

914

915

916

917

918

919

920

921

922

923

924

925

926

927

928

929

930

931

932

933

934

935

936

937

938

939

940

941

942

943

944

945

946

947

948

949

950

951

952

953

954

955

956

957

958

959

960

961

962

963

964

965

966

967

968

969

970

971

972

973

974

975

976

977

978

979

980

981

982

983

984

985

986

987

988

989

990

991

992

993

994

995

996

997

998

999

1000

ALL. (Sing.)
Though we have had our chances
With over night romances
With the Harvard and the Dartmouth male.

And though we've had a bunch in
tow from Princeton Junction
We're saving ourselves for Yale

ALL.
Boola-Boola
For thirty years and then some
We've been showing men some
Tricks that make their motors fail

And tho' we've all had squeezes
From lots of Phdses
We're saving ourselves for Yale

SUSIE. (Sings.)
And when
ALL.
Finally married we lie
It will be with an Eli

SUSIE.
Cause we're
ALL.
Saving ourselves for Yale

CARTER. (Raising her hand.) I knew we had a purpose. (The women curtsy for their fathers. Mrs. Plumm applauds and Susie Friend steps forward.)

END SCENE

ACT TWO

SCENE 2

SUSIE. Hi! I'm Susie Friend, co-ordinator of Father-Daughter weekend, and I'm delighted to see so many of you Dads here.

36

First of all on behalf of the college, I would like to thank Holly Kaplan's father for his generous gift of 2000 slightly damaged velvet bows. They're terrific. I'm sure they'll come in handy. Tomorrow night Mrs. Plumm has promised to play for us the white-breasted nuthatch tapes which she made last weekend on her annual spring birdwatch. And now our favorite housemother, Mrs. Plumm.

MRS. PLUMM. Welcome, fathers. This weekend has always been for me the highlight of the Spring Semester. My Junior year, my father stopped attending Father-Daughter weekend. You see that year, my birder classmate Ada Grudder and I had decided it was too dangerous for young girls to go on long bird watching trips unprotected. So I wrote home asking for money to buy a rifle. (Pause.) Gentlemen, please don't stop me if I go on too long. (Pause.) My father was appalled. He thought firearms did not provide an appropriate pastime for young women. And he feared I might be labeled eccentric. But I bought the rifle. Ada and I set up a firing range on Upper Lake where we re-enacted the Franco-Prussian War. For two years I received notes from home saying "Please marry Hoyt Plumm, and can't you teach bird watching at the High School." Finally, being a dutiful daughter, I did. Now if you will follow your daughters into the date parlour we can begin the dance. (Girls begin to exit.)

SAMANTHA. This way, Daddy. (Rita winks again.)
MRS. PLUMM. Could you put out that cigar, dear?

END SCENE

ACT TWO

SCENE 3

MAN'S VOICE. In the growth of tradition from the time of its founding by Mary Lyon to the present day the College continues to believe that the acquisition of knowledge of itself is not enough. Indeed, employers of graduates of the college seem to be looking for a readiness to work hard at learning unfamiliar techniques.

37

LEILAH. (*Muffet is putting on make-up. Leilah enters carrying a chocolate bunny.*) Muffy, this package just came for you.

MUFFET. What is this? "For my Muffet. I can't bluff it. An Easter Bunny for my pixie honey."

LEILAH. Is that from Susie Friend?

MUFFET. Christ no! It's from her father. Look, it's signed—Lovens, E. Courtland "Kippy" Friend. He was behind me in the bunny hop at the Father-Daughter weekend. Leilah, do you think I should plan to marry Kippy Friend? It's two months before graduation and I still don't know what I'm going to do next year. But I am prepared for life. I can fold my napkin with the best of them. Leilah, do you want this? I'll give it to Holly, she'll eat it.

LEILAH. I asked my father not to come up this year. Actually, my freshman year he came to Father-Daughter weekend and kept dancing with Katie and telling me how lucky I was to have such a good friend. Kate told him I was the prettiest and the brightest girl here. Ever since then, I make it a point to be busy doing research every Father-Daughter weekend. (*Throws down books.*) Oh, I can't wait to get out of here. I've booked a flight to Iraq for the day after graduation.

MUFFET. Really, Leilah, that's odd. You're very odd.

LEILAH. I won a fellowship.

MUFFET. Pink Pants is leaving right after graduation also. Lei, if he calls would you tell him I went away for the weekend? We had another fight yesterday.

LEILAH. What happened?

MUFFET. Nothing. He told me that next year he wants to work his way around the world on a freighter. I tried to appear like "sure," "that's fine," "Have a nice trip," "send a postcard." I don't understand why when Samantha meets someone suddenly she's pinned and when I want someone they tell me I'm being clutchy and putting too much pressure on them. I don't want any commitment. I like being alone.

LEILAH. Me too.

MUFFET. Leilah, where do women meet men after college? Does Merrill Lynch have mixers with Time Life staffers at the General Foods Media department?

LEILAH. I don't know who I'll meet in Iraq. I like that. Katie says I'm escaping. I think I just need to be in a less competitive culture.

38

MUFFET. Why does Katie bother you so much?

LEILAH. Excuse me?

MUFFET. I can't understand why Katie bothers you so much.

LEILAH. She doesn't. I like Katie. She's exceptional.

MUFFET. Katie has no hips.

LEILAH. It could be Social Darwinism. Katie could simply be a superior creature.

MUFFET. Pink Pants says you're prettier than Katie.

LEILAH. Sometimes when I'm in the library studying, I look up and I count the Kattes and the Leilahs. They're always together. And they seem a very similar species. But if you observe a while longer the Kattes seem kind of magical, and the Leilahs are highly competent. And they're usually such good friends—really the best. But I find myself secretly hoping that when we leave here Katie and I will just naturally stop speaking. There's something . . . (*Leilah begins to cry.*) It's not Katie's fault! Sometimes I wonder if it's normal for a twenty-year-old woman to be so constantly aware of another woman . . . "Thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season."

MUFFET. (*Suddenly concerned for Leilah.*) Mrs. Plumm thinks about Ada Grudder often.

LEILAH. If we did stop speaking she wouldn't even notice, or if she did, she'd just think she wasn't a good person for a day. I just want to get out of here so I'm not with people who know me in terms of her.

MUFFET. Leilah, why don't you come out with me tonight? I've always wanted to do this. We can go to a bar, not sleazy but also not a place where two nice girls usually go. And we'll sit alone, just you and I, with our two Brandy Alexanders and we won't need any outside attention. We'll be two uncommon women, mysterious but proud. (*Muffet puts her arm around Leilah.*)

LEILAH. All-right. I'd like that.

MUFFET. (*Honestly.*) Leilah, I do understand a little. It's debilitating constantly seeing your worth in terms of someone else.

VOICE. Male L.D. for Muffet DiNicola. Muffet DiNicola, Male L.D.

LEILAH. I'll take it for you Muffy.

MUFFET. (*Pauses and then gets her coat.*) No, it's got to be Old Pink Pants. Would you sign an overnight slip for me? See, Leilah, I know myself and as soon as the phone rings, I'm just fine.

39

(Muffet leaves with her coat. Leilab is left alone in the room holding the chocolate bunny.)

END SCENE

ACT TWO

SCENE 4

MAN'S VOICE. A liberal education opens out in many different directions; when intellectual experience is a real adventure, it leads toward the unfamiliar. Students at the college are expected to encounter a wide range of opportunities—That is to say uncertainties. A maturing mind must have an ethical base, a set of values, and wonder at the unknown.

(Rita, Holly, Kate, Muffet, Carter and Susie Friend, and Leilab, are in the living room. There is a large jar of peanut butter and fluff and some crackers on the table. They are putting large globs of fluff on their fingers and crackers.)

RITA. I think if I make it to thirty I'm going to be pretty fucking amazing.

HOLLY. My mother called me today and told me she saw a 280 pound woman on Merv Griffin, who had her lips wired together and lives on Fresca. She offered me a lip job as a graduation present.

MUFFET. Pass the fluff.

KATE. This stuff is vile. I bet the kitchen help took home the desserts. (Samantha runs excitedly into the room.)

SAMANTHA. I have something to tell you. I'm getting married to Robert. (She starts to sing to the melody of Offenbach's "Can-Can.")

I'm leaving here

Goodbye to all of you

Things are just beginning

And I can't stop grinning.

(She starts doing kicks and bumming the song.)

Da-da-da-da-da-da-da

Da-da-da-da-da-da-da

(She goes into the finale.)

40

Things are beginning and
I'm grinning through my tears
Goodbye my friends

I'll miss you all through the years

The date is set for June

Da-dum-da-dum-da-dum

Da-da!

(Nobody moves. The women throughout the song have been frozen.)

SUSIE. Samantha, NO.

SAMANTHA. Yes.

SUSIE. NO.

SAMANTHA. YES.

SUSIE. NO.

SAMANTHA. YES.

SUSIE. Let's run and tell Mrs. Plumm. (Susie and Samantha exit squealing no, yes . . . There is silence for a few moments. Carter continues to eat.)

MUFFET. How come Carter eats so much Milk n' Crackers every night and never gains weight?

CARTER. I throw up immediately afterwards.

END SCENE

ACT TWO

SCENE 5

MAN'S VOICE. The college fosters the ability to accept and even welcome the necessity of strenuous and sustained effort in any area of endeavor. (Enter Rita in denim jacket and cap.)

RITA. Hey, man wanna go out and cruise for pussy?

SAMANTHA. Beg your pardon?

RITA. Come on, man.

SAMANTHA. (Putting hair brush in her mouth as if it were a pipe.) Can't we talk about soccer? Did you see Dartmouth take us? They had us in the hole.

RITA. I'd sure like to get into a hole.

SAMANTHA. Man, be polite.

41

RITA. (Gives Samantha a light punch on the arm.) Fuck, man.
 SAMANTHA. (Softly at first.) Shit man. (She laughs hysterically.)
 RITA. Fucking "A" man.
 SAMANTHA. Excuse me.
 RITA. Samantha, you're losing the gist.
 SAMANTHA. I just feel more comfortable being the corporate type. Won't you sit down? Can I get you a drink? Want to go out and buy Lacoste shirts and the State of Maine?
 RITA. (Picking up Samantha's bag of nuts.) Nice nuts you got there.
 SAMANTHA. Thank you. You can only get them west of the Mississippi.
 RITA. (Chewing on the nuts.) I'll give you a vasectomy if you give me one. (Pause.)
 SAMANTHA. (She breaks her male character.) Rita, I liked the game when we said who we would marry much better. All right. (She goes back into character.) Anyway, I don't want a vasectomy. I like homes and babies.
 RITA. (Rita picks up Piglet.) Hey, man what's this? You got a fucking doll, man, with two button eyes, a pink little ass, and a striped T-shirt. I could really get into this. This dollie got a name, man? Piglet?
 SAMANTHA. (Disliking game.) I don't know.
 RITA. What's the matter, man? You afraid I think you're a pansy or something?
 SAMANTHA. (Drops character.) Rita, cut it out.
 RITA. Samantha, I'm only playing.
 SAMANTHA. We're twenty-one years old and I don't want to play.
 RITA. Then why do you have the fucking doll?
 SAMANTHA. (Taking doll, she begins to exit.) I like my doll. I've had it ever since my Dad won it when I was in sixth grade at the Naperville Fair.
 RITA. (Dropping doll and character.) Samantha, you don't like me.
 SAMANTHA. I like you, Rita. We're just very different. And I don't want to play anymore.
 RITA. Do you know what, Samantha? If I could be any one of us, first I would be me. That's me without any embarrassment or

42

neurosis—and since that's practically impossible, my second choice is, I'd like to be you.
 SAMANTHA. But, Rita, when you're thirty you'll be incredible.
 RITA. Samantha, at least you made a choice. You decided to marry Robert. None of the rest of us has made any decisions.
 SAMANTHA. (Pause.) Thanks, Rita.
 RITA. Well, I don't want to spend oodles of time with you. You're not a fascinating person. But I do want to be you. Very much. (Pause.) You're the ideal woman.
 SAMANTHA. Robert says that I never grew up into a woman. That I'm sort of a child woman. I've been reading a lot of books recently about women who are wives of artists and actors and how they believe their husbands are geniuses, and they are just a little talented. Well, that's what I am. Just a little talented at a lot of things. That's why I want to be with Robert and all of you. I want to be with someone who makes a public statement. And, anyway, if I'm going to devote my uncommon talents to relationships, then I might as well nurture those that are a bit difficult. It makes me feel a little special.
 RITA. (Taking Samantha's hand.) You are special, Samantha. We're all special.
 SAMANTHA. It's a quiet intelligence. But I like it. (Pause.) Hey, Rita when's your birthday? Because when we get out of here, we probably won't see each other very much. But I want to be sure to send you a birthday card. I like you, Rita.
 RITA. It's March 28. I'm an Aries. Aries women are impulsive and daring, but have terrible domineering blocks.
 SAMANTHA.
 March 28 is the day of Rita's birthday, hipporay.
 She talks of cocks and Aries blocks
 But what's so neeta, about my Rita
 Is I know secretly, she's very sweeta.
 (Starts to giggle.) Pretty fucking gross, man, huh! (She gives Rita a light punch and they begin to exit together.)
 RITA. (Gives her a light punch and starts to giggle.) Yeah, pretty fucking gross, man. (Scene ends as they continue to giggle and exit with their arms around each other.)

END SCENE

43

ACT TWO

SCENE 6

MAN'S VOICE. The college maintains that along with knowledge, compassionate understanding is a central human activity. (Carter is sitting on the floor typing rhythmically to the Hallelujah Chorus. Enter Kate who turns off the music.)

KATE. Carter, do you think I'm boring? I was just reading Wittgenstein and I tried to imagine the film version. I even lit a candle and tried to imagine the film version and all I could come up with is you're very weird. See Carter, you can interrupt me if you want. I've always thought it's a waste of time to scatter one's energy. I'm not saying you're wasting your time making Wittgenstein films. They're certainly not redundant, and it's a good field for women, but the possibility would never occur to me. Carter, I'm afraid that I'm so directed that I'll grow up to be a cold efficient lady in a grey business suit. Suddenly, there I'll be, an Uncommon Woman ready to meet the future with steadiness, gaiety and a profession, and what's more I'll organize it all with time to blow dry my hair every morning. Tonight everything seems so programmed. Just once it would be nice to wake up with nothing to prove. Sometimes I wonder what I'd do if I didn't work or go to school for a while. But if I didn't fulfill obligations or be exemplary, then I really don't know what I'd do. I have a stake in all those uncommon women expectations. I know how to do them well. I don't mind that you're not chatty. Neither am I. Do you know that I've slept with more men than Muffet or Rita. Really, it's true, I like sex with irresponsible people. It's exciting, like a trashy novel. But I couldn't live with anyone irresponsible. Gross-me-out. Carter, I admire you. I really do. Sometimes I think you'll let me into your world which is more interesting, well, more imaginative than mine. When I'm around Holly and Muffet I congratulate myself on being such a well prepared grown-up. But I'm always watching myself. When I'm with you I'm not watching myself. I feel comfortable. Isn't that odd, Carter. You're not specifically a comforting person. Maybe we have that in common. I feel as if I'm under-articulating. (Pause.) I came in here cause I just got into Law School and I don't think I should go. I don't want my life to simply fall into place. (Pause.) Carter, can I sit here for a

44

while? I'm frightened. (Carter begins to put her arm around Kate. Kate pulls back.) No, that's all right, pumpkin. I'll just sit here for a while and then go back to work. (Carter goes back to her typing. Kate, getting up.) Why have you typed, "Now is the time for all good" twenty-five times?

CARTER. I am cramming for my typing test. I need fifty words per minute to get a good job when I get out of here. (Kate puts the Hallelujah Chorus back on. Music swells as Carter continues to type.)

END SCENE

ACT TWO

SCENE 7

MAN'S VOICE. The college places at its center the content of human learning and the spirit of systematic disinterested inquiry. (It is late. The women are all studying. Kate looks up from her book.)

KATE. Holly, did you ever have penis envy?

HOLLY. I beg your pardon?

KATE. Did you ever have penis envy?

HOLLY. I remember having tonsillitis.

KATE. Have you, Samantha?

SAMANTHA. I know I never had it. Robert's was the first one I ever saw. I didn't even know men had pubic hair.

KATE. How big was Robert's? Holly, don't fall asleep. This may be the last chance we have to accumulate comparative data. We're graduating in two more weeks. Now I remember Thomas' was around this big. That's small to medium with a tendency towards tumescence, and Iki was around this big. But it was curved so you can't trust my estimation. In fact, if I can remember the others were all kind of average. Oh, yeah, except for Blaise. His really did stand out. It was the biggest I ever saw. Except it was just like him. Large, functional, and Waspy. (Kate may demonstrate size with a pencil and break it in half to show a smaller variety.)

HOLLY. I knew a boy at Columbia with three balls. Really. He

45

came up to see me my freshman year because his psychiatrist said I wouldn't mind.

KATE. Did you sleep with him?

HOLLY. I didn't want to hurt his feelings.

KATE. Holly, you're such a mealy-mouth.

HOLLY. I didn't care. I guess I don't like men's underwear. Especially when they don't remove it and it's left dangling around one ankle. In fact, if you'd like a run down of every flacid appendage in the Ivy League, I can give you details.

KATE. I've never been with an impotent man.

HOLLY. You haven't lived.

KATE. Listen to this! This is from a chapter in Chip Knowles' new book: *Women My Issue*. Chip has concluded, and I quote. "That the discovery at four months that a girl is castrated is the turning point in her road. At fourteen months little girls fingers and pacifiers are introduced into the vagina and at fifteen months a girl baby has been known to fall asleep with her genitalia on her Teddy bear. Finally, at sixteen months they start using a pencil."

SAMANTHA. Don't little boys use pencils?

HOLLY. No, they write with their cocks.

SAMANTHA. But don't men have breast and womb envy?

KATE. Well, if they have it, they just become creative or cook dinner every now and then.

HOLLY. I guess I envy men. I envy their confidence. I envy their options. But I never wanted a fleshy appendage. Especially a little boy's. Whenever I get fat I get nauseated because it looks like I have one in my pants. (Pause.) Katie, this is nonsense. The only people who have penis envy are other men.

KATE. You mean it's all those appendages compensating for being small?

HOLLY. Yeah.

SAMANTHA. Well, I know I wouldn't want one 'cause then I couldn't have Robert's. What time is it?

KATE. 2 a.m.

SAMANTHA. I gotta go to bed, I have an Art History final in the morning.

KATE. Good night, pumpkin. (Pause.) Holly, do you think I have penis envy?

HOLLY. Oh, Katie, gross me out!

KATE. No, really for me it's entirely possible.

46

HOLLY. You don't have it. (Enter Rita frazzled. She immediately throws herself on a bed or couch.)

RITA. You don't have what?

KATE. Nothing. Rita, what's the matter?

RITA. (She goes into a womb position.) I can't sleep.

HOLLY. What's wrong Rita?

RITA. (Gets up.) Nothing. I keep having recurrent *Let's Make a Deal* dreams . . . and my future is always behind the curtain, and the audience is screaming at me, NO, NO TAKE THE BOX! TAKE THE BOX! I haven't told anyone, but yesterday I went to New York, on a job interview. It was for one of those, "I graduated from a seven sister school and now I'm in publishing jobs."

KATE. Did you get the job?

RITA. I did very well at the interview. I told the interviewer that I was an English Composition Major, and I liked Virginia Woolf and Thackeray, but I really want to assistant edit beauty hints. I told her yes I thought it was so important for women to work and I would continue to write beauty hints even with a husband and family. The big thing at these interviews is to throw around your new found female pride as if it were an untapped natural resource.

HOLLY. Did you get the job?

RITA. Holly, don't be so result oriented. Anyway, at the end of the interview she told me it was delightful, I told her it was delightful, we were both delightful. She walked me to the door, and said, "Tell me dear, do you have experience with a Xerox machine?" I said, "Yes. And I've tasted my menstrual blood."

KATE. Rita, you didn't really do that, did you?

RITA. I did. Holly, I can't go to one of those places. I don't know what I'm going to do, but it's not going to be that. I'm not going to throw my imagination away. I refuse to live down to expectation. If I can just hold out 'til I'm thirty, I'll be incredible.

HOLLY. Rita, I think you're already incredible.

RITA. Actually I do have a new fantasy that helps me deal with the future. I pretend that I am *Picara* in a picaresque novel and this is only one episode in a satiric life. (Rita gets up.) Hey pumpkins, let's go down and hit the candy machine and see how much weight we can gain in a night.

KATE. All right, I should do one kinky thing before we graduate. HOLLY. No, I have more work to do.

47

RITA. (*Triumphant again.*) And when the candy machine is empty, I'm going to start writing my novel. (*Kate and Rita exit.*)
 HOLLY. (*Alone.*) She puts on the tape player and lies down on the bed smoking. A recording of James Taylor.* She reaches to the telephone and dials, and puts her raccoon coat over her comfort. Operator, I'd like the phone number of a Dr. Mark Silverstein in Minneapolis, Minn. Could you connect me with that number please? Thank you. Hello, can I speak to Mark? Oh, do you have his number in Philadelphia? Thank you. No, that's all right. I'll call him there. (*Dials again.*) Hello, may I please speak to Mark? Oh, Hi. My name is Holly Kaplan. I met you last summer at a museum with my friend Muffet. It was the Fogg Museum. Oh that's all right, I never remember who I meet at museums either. (*She giggles.*) What's new? I'm not quite certain what I'll be doing next year. I'm having trouble remembering what I want. My friend Katie says I'm too diffuse. You'd like Katie. She's basing her life on Katherine Hepburn in *Adam's Rib*. She didn't tell me that but it's a good illustration. No, I haven't been back to the Fogg Museum this year. My brother goes to Harvard Medical, Business, and Law School. Maybe I'll move to Philadelphia. (*She giggles.*) I'm in North Stimson Hall, fourth floor, under my raccoon coat. I guess everything's all right here. I just like being under my coat. Last week when I was riding the bus back from Yale and covering myself with it I thought I had finally made it into a Salinger story. Only, I hated the bus, college, my boyfriend and my parents. The only thing really nice was the coat. (*Pause.*) I take that back about my parents. Do you know what the expression "Good Ga Davened" means? It means someone who davened doctors, and go to Bermuda for Memorial day weekends. These girls are also doctors, but they only work part-time because of their three musically-inclined children, and weekly brownstone restorations. I think Mount Holyoke mothers have access to a "did well" list published annually, in New York, Winnetka, and Beverly Hills, and distributed on High Holy Days and Episcopal bake sales. I'm afraid I'm on the waiting list. (*Pause.*) You were on the waiting list for Johns Hopkins. I have a good memory for indecision. My mother says doctors take advantage unless you're thin. And then

* See special note on copyright page.

they want to marry you and place you among the good ga davened. She says girls who have their own apartments hang towels from the windows so the men on the street know when to come up. My friend Alice Harwitch is becoming a doctor and I've never seen her enter a strange building with towels in the windows. Of course, she's a radical lesbian. Sorry to have bothered you. Hey, maybe you'd like to visit here sometime, it's very pretty in the spring. We could see Emily Dickinson's house and buy doughnuts. I think about her a lot. And doughnuts, I think about them a lot too. No, I don't write poetry, and I haven't read *The Bell Jar*. My friend Rita has. I don't know who Rita's basing her life on. Sometimes I think she'd like to be Katherine Hepburn, but Katie has the Katherine Hepburn market cornered and we're all allowed only one dominant characteristic. I'm holding a lottery for mine. (*She giggles again.*) Yes, I guess I do giggle a lot, and I am too cynical. I have my sarcastic summer when I was sixteen and somehow it exponentially progressed. Lelah, she's my nice friend who's merging with Margaret Mead, says sarcasm is a defense. Well, I couldn't very well call you up and tell you to move me to Minneapolis and let's have babies, could I? (*Her tone of voice changes.*) Well, sorry to have bothered you. Really, I'm fine. I find great comfort in Lay Lady Lay, One Bad Apple Don't Spoil The Whole Bunch Girl, and my raccoon coat. And I like my friends, I like them a lot. They're really exceptional. Uncommon women and all that drivel. Of course, they're not risky. I'm not frightened I'll ruin my relationship with them. Sometimes I think I'm happiest walking with my best. Katie always says she's my best, shredding leaves and bubble gum along the way and talking. Often I think I want a date or a relationship to be over so I can talk about it to Kate or Rita. I guess women are just not as scary as men and therefore they don't count as much. (*Holly begins to cry.*) I didn't mean that, I guess they just always make me feel worthwhile. (*Pause.*) Thank you, I'm sure you're worthwhile too. (*She is resigned.*) It's all right, I'm not going to tell Muffet I called you. Muffet's the girl who was with me in the museum. Oh, that's all right. Well, thanks for talking to me. Goodbye, thank you. I guess so. (*Holly gets down on the bed. Turns the tape player back on. Slides the raccoon coat over her head. Music swells. Lights fade out.*)

END SCENE

ACT TWO

SCENE 8

Pomp and Circumstance music is heard under the male voice. *The girls march in and form a line behind Mrs. Plumm's tea service.*

MAN'S VOICE. Commencement brings a whole set of new opportunities, as varied as they are numerous. By the time a class has been out ten years, more than nine-tenths of its members are married and many of them devote a number of years exclusively to bringing up a family. But immediately after commencement nearly all Mount Holyoke graduates find jobs or continue studying. Today all fields are open to women, and more than fifty percent continue in professional or graduate school. Anyone of a variety of majors may lead to a position as Girl Friday for an Eastern Senator, service volunteer in Venezuela, or assistant sales director of *Reader's Digest*. (*Lights up on Mrs. Plumm seated in the living room. Kate walks up to Mrs. Plumm.*)

MRS. PLUMM. What are your plans, dear?

KATE. I'm starting Harvard Law School in the fall.

MRS. PLUMM. Good luck, dear. (*Mrs. Plumm bands Kate a tea-cup. Kate sits. Leilah moves up to Mrs. Plumm.*) What are your plans, dear?

LEILAH. I'm studying anthropology in Mesopotamia.

MRS. PLUMM. Good luck, dear. What are your plans, Susie?

SUSIE. I'm becoming a security analyst, for Morgan Guarantee Trust.

MRS. PLUMM. Good luck, dear. (*Susie kisses Mrs. Plumm.*) What are your plans, dear?

SAMANTHA. As you know, I'm marrying Robert Cabe. He's going to be a successful actor.

MRS. PLUMM. Good luck, dear. (*The good luck, dear here is said in a different tone than it was to Kate. Mrs. Plumm bands Samantha a tea-cup. Samantha sits. Holly moves up to Mrs. Plumm.*) Holly, dear. Have you thought about Katie Gibbs? It's an excellent business school. (*Mrs. Plumm bands Holly a cup. Holly leaves the cup and sits. Enter Muffet.*) What are your plans, dear?

MUFFET. I'm assuming something is going to happen to me. I

50

figure I have two months left. (*Muffet giggles and Mrs. Plumm giggles.*)

MRS. PLUMM. Good luck, dear. (*Rita moves up as Muffet sits down and she immediately starts talking.*)

RYTA. Well, God knows there is no security in marriage. You give up your anatomy, economic self-support, spontaneous creativity, and a helluva lot of energy trying to convert a male (half person) into a whole person who will eventually stop draining you, so you can do your own work. And the alternative—hopping onto the corporate or professional ladder is just as self-destructive. If you spend your life proving yourself, then you just become a man, which is where the whole problem began and continues. All I want is a room of my own so I can get into my writing. I was going to marry Clark, but he advertised himself as a houseboy in *The Village Voice* and I didn't want damaged goods. . . .

MRS. PLUMM. (*Cutting Rita off.*) I'm afraid our time is up, dear. (*Rita grabs a cup to toast Mrs. Plumm, and sits down. Mrs. Plumm gets up to address the audience, with the graduates sitting beside her.*) You are all to be congratulated on your graduation. And thank you. I certainly didn't expect such an elaborate party for my retirement. I'm so glad to see so many students, faculty, and friends—Dr. Ada Grudder, who travelled here all the way from Nagpur, India. Many memories, seasons, and teas come to mind. But I thought I'd share with you some recent thoughts. At my last Milk 'n Crackers at the college I had an interesting talk with Kate Quin, an articulate young woman, who told me somewhat wistfully that she thought my retirement and the recent student vote to abolish "Gracious Living," marked the end of an era. I have seen the world confronting Kate and her classmates expand—The realm of choices can be overwhelming. However, those of you who have known me as the constant dutiful daughter of my Alma Mater, and my family, may be surprised to know that I do not fear the change for my girls, nor myself. My work here completed, I plan to go on a little adventure. Next summer I will travel to Bolivia which is the heartland of ornithological variety on this planet. My dear friend Ada, has returned to me our trusty rifle. So you see, girls, perhaps even I am in a transition period. (*When Mrs. Plumm mentions Ada Grudder the girls look out to the audience for her.*) Am I cavalier about leaving gracious-living and tea? Hardly. You see as a housemother and teacher most often I have found my work

51

exciting. But when I grew weary or disgruntled, like Emily Dickinson, I too tired of the world and sometimes found it lacking, the gentler joys of tea, sherry, and conversation with women friends, and I've made many good ones here, have always been a genuine pleasure. Thank you . . . and good-bye. *(The girls applaud Mrs. Plumm. Carter enters and brings in flowers. Muffy, Kate, Holly, Rita and Samantha watch as Mrs. Plumm exits with Carter and Susie Friend and Leilah who have gone up to congratulate her.)*

END SCENE

ACT TWO

SCENE 9

MAN'S VOICE FADING INTO WOMAN'S VOICE. A liberal arts college for women of talent is more important today than at any time in the history of her education. Women still encounter overwhelming obstacles to achievement and recognition despite gradual abolition of legal and political disabilities. Society has trained women from childhood to accept a limited set of options and restricted levels of aspirations.

SAMANTHA. I saw Carter's Wittgenstein movie on Public Television.

KATE. Maybe I should have married Carter.

MUFFET. Leilah got married in Iraq.

KATE. You're kidding.

MUFFET. She married some Iraqi journalist, archeologist. She gave up her citizenship and converted to Moslem. She can never be divorced.

RITA. Oh, my God.

KATE. Sometimes I thought I was a bad friend to Leilah and other times I just thought she was crazy. *(Rita touches Kate assuringly.)*

RITA. Kate, do you ever have anxiety attacks? I mean the kind that gives you the shits. I'm up every night till five A.M. and then I have fever dreams that I'm back in Cranfield Heights and my father has put me in the caboose of a Lionel train that goes through the Fundamental Church. And the men in the congregation are

52

staring at my cunt singing, "Meow, Meow, Meow, Meow, Meow, Meow, Meow." Marilyn, my shrink says to start slowly. So I figure if I can sleep in the morning, watch a little tube at night, I'll have it together long enough to write my novel. I figure if I can make it to forty, I can be pretty fucking amazing.

KATE. I don't know, Rita. Maybe I don't have an artistic temperament, like you and Holly. I went to see a shrink this year. A friend of Kent's.

MUFFET. Who's Kent?

KATE. The man I was sort of living with. He started objecting to my working late. I guess it never occurred to me in college that someone wouldn't want me to be quite so uncommon. Anyway, I went to see this shrink and we had four productive sessions together and I feel fine.

MUFFET. Katie, you were all better after four sessions? You're still an over-achiever.

KATE. I don't live with Kent anymore. Kent's a lovely "enlightened" man who wants to marry Donna Reed. All right Donna Reed with an M.A. But I guess right now I'm committed to my work. *(Pause.)*

MUFFET. Do you really like insurance?

MUFFET. Wallace Stevens was in Insurance. When I first took my job I wondered what I was doing being an insurance seminar hostess. I mean, where was my prince? I guess I assumed something special would happen to me. Now I live in Hartford and I go to work every day and I won't be in the Alumnae Magazine like you, Katie, at the Justice Department or Nina Mandelbaum with her pediatric pulmonary specialist. But, I never thought I'd be supporting myself and I am. *(Kate touches Muffet's hand.)* Rita, I don't see how you can become strong living off Timmy. You're not doing anything.

RITA. We're suing Timmy's mother for his stocks. Actually, Kate, I was going to ask you about them—we need a good lawyer. The stocks are in his name, but in Timmy's mother's vault.

SAMANTHA. Rita, do you love Timmy?

RITA. I thought he'd be my Leonard Woolf. *(Pause.)* I just wanted to be protected like you, Samantha. *(Rita puts her arm around Samantha.)* Samantha, you have a good marriage, don't you?

SAMANTHA. Yes, I guess I do. Sometimes I get intimidated by all of Robert's friends who come to the house. And I think I haven't

53

done very much of anything important. So I don't talk. But Robert respects me. (*She smiles. Pause.*) I don't want to sound like Mrs. Plumm, but I just want to say that I'm glad we all got together today. I had second thoughts about seeing all of you, especially Kate and Rita. Sometimes I think you might disapprove of what I do. I don't live alone, I'm not a professional and I tend to be too polite. What I really want to tell you is Robert and I are having a baby.

MUFFET. (*Gets up to kiss Samantha.*) That's wonderful, Samantha.

RITA. Why didn't you tell us?

SAMANTHA. It's not as easy as telling you I was getting married to him. Remember when I ran into the room? Now there are more options. I decided that I was a little embarrassed to tell you, but I'm also happy.

KATE. (*Kisses Samantha.*) I'm so pleased for you, Samantha, really. I even promise to sit for you on Election Day—that's my one day off. (*Pause.*) I wonder if I'll ever decide to have a child. I hardly think about it and when I do I tell myself there's still a lot of time. I wonder what it's like when you stop thinking there's a lot of time left to make changes. (*Pause. Samantha smiles slightly.*)

RITA. (*Trying to make conversation, and putting her arm around Samantha and Holly.*) I bought the new James Taylor album last week, I put it on at five A.M. and I thought this will be a comfort. It will remind me of my friends and I'll be able to make some connection between the past and the present. And all I heard was, "Carly, I love you, darling I do." Now, how did he turn out so well adjusted? Every other person I talk to is suddenly fine and has decided to go to medical school or has found inner peace through EST. I just had hoped that at least James Taylor would hold out for something more ambiguous.

HOLLY. (*Who has been listening intently during the scene.*) You know for the past six years I have been afraid to see any of you. Mostly because I haven't made any specific choices. My parents used to call me three times a week at seven A.M. to ask me, "Are you thin, are you married to a root canal man, are you a root canal man?" And I'd hang up and wonder how much longer am I going to be in "transition." I guess since college I've missed

54

the comfort and acceptance I felt with all of you. And I thought you didn't need that anymore, so I didn't see you.

KATE. Holly, I don't want to go back and have "Gracious Living" and tea anymore. But I still want to see all of you. We knew we were natural resources before anyone decided to tap us. (*Pause for a moment as the girls all look at each other and finally smile together.*)

HOLLY. Let's have a toast.

SAMANTHA. All right, pumpkins, a toast, to Katie's law firm.

KATE. To Robert.

HOLLY. To Rita's novel.

MUFFET. To Wallace Stevens.

ALL. To Carter.

KATE. I'm glad we decided to get together today too. I've been feeling a little numb lately. And I know I wasn't like that in college. You remember a person, don't you? Anyway, lately, especially at those boring meetings, I look around at all those wingtip feet and I remember Holly saying men write with their cocks—and I suspect many of the junior partners do, and Rita writing her novel, and Samantha being a closet wit, and Muffet and her prince. (*Pause.*) I'm glad we got together too. I miss you. (*Pause as she looks at all of them.*) And I've got to go. I'll get the check.

SAMANTHA. We could charge it to Robert.

KATE. No, I'll take it as a tax deduction. Holly, what are you doing?

HOLLY. I keep a list of options. Just from today's lunch, there's law, insurance, marry Leonard Woolf, have a baby, bird watch in Bolivia. A myriad of openings.

KATE. I've got to go. Kent says I dawdle. (*Pause.*) You all have my numbers. (*After Kate exits there is silence in the room. The girls look at each other quietly.*)

SAMANTHA. My dad was re-elected Mayor of Naperville.

HOLLY. My sister is marketing director of Proctor and Gamble.

RITA. Ada Grudder won the Nobel Prize. No, she didn't really, but I like to think so.

MUFFET. (*Getting up to put on her coat.*) Let's go to the movies.

SAMANTHA. (*Getting up.*) I have my car outside. Let's go see "Cries and Whispers."

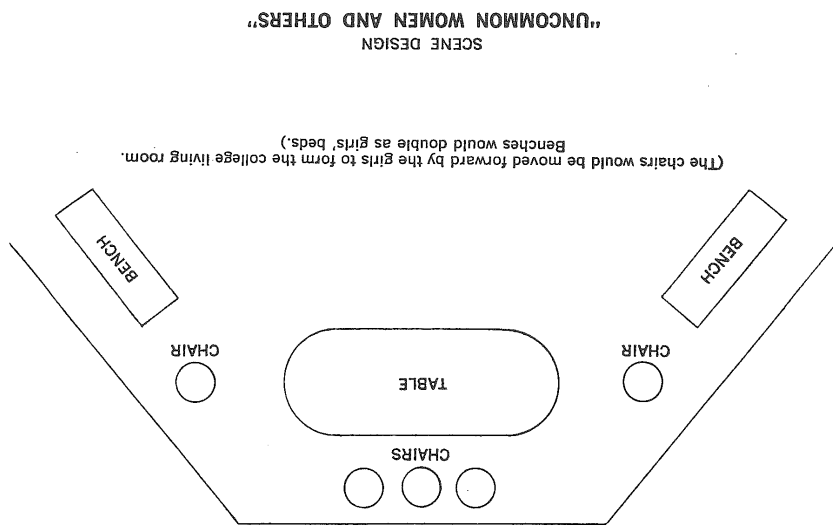
MUFFET. (*Muffet laughs slightly and puts her arm around*

55

Samantha.) Hey, Holly, did you know Melissa Weex became a Rockette?
 RITA. (Moving to Holly, and putting on her coat.) Timmy says when I get my head together, and if he gets the stocks, I'll be able to do a little writing. I think if I make it to forty I can be pretty amazing. (She takes Holly's hand.) Holly, when we're forty we can be pretty amazing. You too Muffy and Samantha, when we're (Rita pauses for a moment.) . . . forty-five we can be pretty fucking amazing. (The Women exit with their arms around each other.)

END

56



57

(Wasserstein, Uncommon Women and Others)

Interview Manuscripts

Allyson Kinch

Q: As a director, what are your general expectations of the scenic designer?

A: They should help the cast get into the world. The actors need to be able to step on stage, and also step into a whole new environment, I personally like when designers include even the smaller details to remind the actors where they are.

Q: What part do you believe the set has in telling the story?

A: It plays a crucial part! The set is the first thing the audience sees; it sets the tone for the whole show. In “Uncommon” the tone was very homey, and as if the actors had been in that space forever.

Q: In what ways did the set design affect your process?

A: It gave a lot to play with, there was a lot of room for creativity. The window seat specifically was fun to play with, with the actors, it really changed how the cast moved.

Q: Did you feel as though this set did its job?

A: One hundred percent.

Q: What changes would you have made in our process working together? What could I have done better?

A: It may have been more on the props side, but it would have been nice to have the furniture sooner.

Q: How was it working with an all female cast, female director, female scenic designer, and female stage management team on a play written by a female playwright?

A: It was very nice! It made everything easier to connect to. We were our own resources and everyone was very comforting and respectful.

Lynnaea Barry

Q: What part do you believe the set design has in telling the story?

A: As an actress in this generation, the set design has an multiple ways in showing the story of the playwright. Scenic designers and their specific visions of the show capture all the energy of each performance, allowing performers to create and identify character choices and how each character may go about their specific transitions and blocking. Creating a “pathway” - for lack of better words, lets the audience want to live the life of the character, letting the story be told while walking through an artistic, comfortable space.

Q: Did the set affect your process as an actress? How so?

A: Of course. In the best way possible, the set created different ways for me to live throughout my character. I was actually extremely lucky to be able to be on the set as it was moving, which gave me the opportunity to connect my character with Mount Holyoke, and the beautiful stain-glasses window I was able to gaze out of. The set affects my process as an actress by its ability to enhance ones performance, and creates an opportunity for ones character to move gracefully and confidently between doorways, hallways, and of course, the moving set pieces.

Q: Have you ever performed without a set? How would you compare that experience with this one?

A: I’ve actually performed without a set a few times, but not anything as long as this production of Uncommon. Uncommon was something that really hit home with me, and made me proud to be a woman. I don’t think an experience like that should be

compared to one without a set, especially when Uncommon's set was such an amazing opportunity.

Q: Was there any point where the Uncommon set "threw you off?"

A: No, actually. The set gave a familiar energy to walk into, one that makes someone feel comforted or welcome.

Q: What would you have liked the designer to do differently?

A: Not necessarily differently, but: to never stop challenging themselves. Set designing, or any artistic process rather can be held back by an ingrown critic in the back of our heads, and it's easy to get caught up. Keep challenging yourself and don't be afraid to push yourself. Set designs border the entire story, and thankfully this one was an active experience every night.

Q: How was working on an all-female cast with female directors and a female designer on a play written by a female?

A: How was it? It was, undoubtedly, one of the most surreal moments of my life seeing all the woman around me smile after opening night of Uncommon Women and Others. The positive, supportive people within this process made it wonderful to walk into the space everyday and create something powerful for people to see. As women, we have to look out for one another. This show showed me hardworking, funny, beautiful women within each character, and helped many women I know see those qualities within themselves. We all helped each other create something that we and many others will always remember, something that stirred up conversation and created joy as well as love between women and others.

Paige Ruggles

Q: What part do you believe the set design has in telling the story?

A: For me, the set cements so many elements of storytelling in theatrical performance. Through the set, the actors and audience are immersed in the time period and world of the play. A good set can also provide clues to a character's state of mind and socioeconomic status based on how messy or clean it is and how it's decorated. For *Uncommon Women*, the common room was clean and organized because the setting was a well-to-do college with a housemother obsessed with image.

Q: Did the set affect your process as an actress? How so?

A: For *Uncommon Women* specifically, I found the set was a huge part of getting into character. Because my character, Mrs. Plumm, was so obsessed with image, my focus as an actor onstage was to keep the set as tidy as possible. It motivated busy work I had to perform during scenes when I wasn't speaking and gave Mrs. Plumm an added layer of character development.

Q: Have you ever performed without a set? How would you compare that experience with this one?

A: Performing without a set is certainly possible, but in my opinion, it's just not the same. Theatre is such an amazing art form that it can be done anywhere, but performing without a set is like a ballerina performing without shoes. It's technically okay to do, but I'd rather not.

Q: Was there any point where the *Uncommon* set "threw you off?"

A: The only complaint I ever had with the entire process of Uncommon Women was getting the tea cart into the room from my doorway, but that had more to do with the construction of the Callan.

Q: What would you have liked the designer to do differently?

A: I could not have asked for a more perfect set for this play. It only added to the performances, especially the stained glass window. It really captured what the houses at seven sisters colleges looked like (a lot of them still look like that too).

Q: How was working on an all-female cast with female directors and a female designer on a play written by a female?

A: I think it's a little cheesy to say that the process for this show was "sacred", but it really was almost spiritual in a way for me. I will say that the lack of issues the process had is a testament to how wonderful art can be when women come together to create. We all understood that this play was important for the audience to see, and it really encapsulated my experiences as a young woman in our world. It's unfortunate that we're in a place where not a lot has changed from 1972 to now, but I think this play has shown all of us that being a woman is a universal experience.

Stephen Zubricki IV

Q: What part do you believe the set has in telling the story?

A: It gives the location of the play and really aids my imagination in picturing the world of the characters. It also gives information about the characters themselves and sets the mood in the atmosphere.

Q: Did the “Uncommon” set play its part?

A: Yes

Q: How would you say the set design affected your experience of the production? How did it affect your mood in the environment?

A: It did a good job of giving the girls their own specific areas. There was a variety of acting locations that made them feel comfortable with where they were. The actors were comfortable in the space, which made the audience feel comfortable as well.

Q: Did anything in the set cause you to be confused? Were you ever “not in the world of the play?”

A: Not really, when the set transitioned into the last scene it took a little longer than I would have liked. The book cases also looked similar to a stock photo, there were lots of large books but no novels, which was interesting.

Q: As someone who has worked in theater, is there anything that you would have liked to see done differently?

A: Just the timing of the transitions and maybe some more molding.

Claudia Marchionda

Q: What part do you believe the set has in telling the story?

A: It immerses the audience and actors into the world of the play. It should create a real and tangible environment to help the actors.

Q: Did the “Uncommon” set play its part?

A: Oh yes.

Q: How would you say the set design affected your experience of the production? How did it affect your mood in the environment?

A: I liked how the set was molded to the space that was the Callan. It looked like it was meant to be there. I really liked the realistic details like the aging and scuffs on the floorboards. It really made me feel like I was there.

Q: Did anything in the set cause you to be confused? Were you ever “not in the world of the play?”

A: The last transition didn’t really feel like we were going forward in time.

Q: As someone who has worked in theater, is there anything that you would have liked to see done differently?

A: I wish that the transitions were faster, and the crew walked with more purpose.

Caitlyn Buja

Q: What part do you believe the set has in telling the story?

A: It gives the setting of the play, which is very important.

Q: Did the “Uncommon” set play its part?

A: Yes.

Q: How would you say the set design affected your experience of the production? How did it affect your mood in the environment?

A: It helped transform the play in where it took place. It was easy to know where they were.

Q: Did anything in the set cause you to be confused? Were you ever “not in the world of the play?”

A: I don't think so.

Q: As someone who has worked in theater, is there anything that you would have liked to see done differently?

A: Conceptually no. I think it would have been cool if the couch was a futon that turned into a bed, and the hanging picture was slightly crooked.

Theresa Soldan

Q: How did the set design affect your experience of the production as a whole?

A: It made everything seem more fluid and made the story come to life for me.

The movement of the scene changes were smooth and made the story continue to progress in a comprehensible way.

Q: Did the set help you understand any specific aspect of the play?

A: Specifically, when the wall moved back and forth and the curtains closing made it clear that we were in a different time period and helped myself as an audience member make that transition.

Q: Have you ever seen a staged reading? How was that experience different? How was it similar?

A: Yes! The set added the sense of realism that you don't get in a staged reading. With staged readings each audience member walks out with a different interpretation of what the scene/set would look like. It was similar because some things were left up to interpretation which can be fun but not as much as a staged reading.

Q: What would you say is the job of a scenic Designer based on your experiences?

A: To work off what is being said and done by the actors and directors. To make it more of a rounded experience for the audience and to foreshadow certain motifs that are throughout the play.

Q: Do you believe this design did it's job?

A: Yes 100%

Q: What should the designer have done differently? Did anything on the set take you "out of the world of the play?"

A: Not really! It was really well done and I felt as if I was really stepping into a college like mount Holyoke. I throughly enjoyed the set!

Liam Conlon

Q: What was your job on this production?

A: The properties master.

Q: How close did you have to work with the scenic designer throughout the process?

A: Very close.

Q: Did your job ever depend on the scenic designer's job at anytime? How so?

A: Yes; I needed to match the era of the furniture and set dressing to the era of the set.

Q: What do you think the scenic designer did well? What could the scenic designer have done better?

A: The way the space was used was done very well. It felt like we were in a large school setting, but still intimate. I think the designer could have delegated more efficiently during the post-design process.

Q: Overall, do you believe all the design aspects worked cohesively?

A: Yes, all aspects contributed to the overall mood and vibe.

Q: In your opinion, did this set help to tell the story?

A: Yes.

Katrina Tuck

Q: What was your position on the show?

A: The assistant technical director.

Q: Was your job dependent on the job of the scenic designer?

A: Yes.

Q: How so?

A: We had to build what was designed by the scenic designer.

Q: Did you have any major difficulties? Explain.

A: Not really. It was a relatively easy design to execute. The space in the Callan was weird though.

Q: How important is communication with the designer?

A: Very.

Q: Did you have good communication?

A: Yes.

Michael Harvey

Q: What would you say is the job of the scenic designer?

A: To help tell the story.

Q: How many years have you been designing scenery?

A: A little over thirty years or so.

Q: What was your proudest design? How was the process?

A: I designed the set for a show called *The Shape of Things*. It was about a girl who was a masters student, and she transforms her boyfriend as an art project. The show ends in a gallery, and all the objects that had been slowly left on stage built her gallery display. It was simple but seamless and I loved the concept and the storytelling aspect.

Q: What affect did the set for *Uncommon Women and Others* have on your experience of the production?

A: It was evocative of a period in location and it really set the mood. It did its job in terms of storytelling and it was believable.

Q: Was there any aspect that took your mind out of the world of the play? Was there anything that held you in?

A: The furniture should have been much older as the school was old and used at that time. The furniture also should have matched more of the late Victorian architecture that was used within the set. There was also a lack of practicals but I loved the paint treatments.

Q: What parts of the design (if any) were strong? What parts were weak?

A: The window was really strong. I am also glad that it wasn't completely made of stained glass, but rather fogged with some stained pieces.

Q: Did the design tell the story?

A: Yes it did.

Works Cited

Information Citations

- Barth, Sheila. "Uncommon Women and Others." The Winthrop Sun Transcript (2019). Mount Holyoke College. "Timeline." 24 August 2012. Mount Holyoke. November 2019 <www.mtholyoke.edu/175/timeline?fbclid=IwAR33jcN-GMRIFWJaQpCJXDOeDNJNSbPnjxMHdZd0jFkKs2fxWzrRHrD4oU#>.
- Powers, Keith. "Exploring Wendy Wasserstein." Wicked Local (2019). Uncommon Women and Others. By Wendy Wasserstein. Dir. Brianne Beatrice. Perf. Chelsea Titchenell, et al. Callan Studio Theater, Salem. 14-24 February 2019.
- . Uncommon Women and Others. Dramatists Play Service Inc., 1977.

Image Citations

- Collection, Print. "Print Collection - 'We Can Do It' Rosie the Riveter." *Printcollection.com*, www.printcollection.com/products/we-can-do-it-rosie-the-riveter?utm_campaign=Pinterest%2BBuy%2BButton&utm_content=pinterest-buy-button-06afd91da-07c9-41ab-ad87-636d612e062d&utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Pinterest#.XMdlB2aZOCR.
- Gray, Peter. "Mount Holyoke Library Window VI." *Flickr*, Yahoo!, 2 Apr. 2007, www.flickr.com/photos/peter_gray/443404031/in/photolist-Fbyz6-8zhZFA-FbCeJ-FbDUF-bmCTXP-4UAEPY-atqtyR-7JK9dQ-77yBNv-7JKa8w-7JK8th-7JK8H9-7JK9Nj-77yBJB-2bpfJF-2bpkc8-BT8eB-2bpfJt-hPF8XP-BT6wf-BT7i9-BT7id-2bucoS-7JFdQP-77yCf2-77Cyy5-7Eh8gA-77CyHh-4QCPXn-xNRAK-xNRz8-2bpfJi-2bpfHF-2bpfGM-32KVbK-2bpfHv-5n3dW6-7Eh8sN-8zhZp5-2bpkdP-BT6wd-K3WbG-8qd9wH-9wrVXs-jLi9Wi-5n3d1i-6qu5N4-FaXqM-7LgrbS-BT7i1.
- Skelley, Jemima. "16 University Campuses That Might Secretly Be Hogwarts." *BuzzFeed*, BuzzFeed, 15 Nov. 2016, www.buzzfeed.com/jemimaskelley/colleges-that-look-like-hogwarts?utm_term=.eoOGOP3E&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=BuzzFeed%2B1116&utm_content=BuzzFeed%2B1116%2BCID_4e91e18013d1cf57aa9d202bc82838aa&utm_source=BuzzFeed%2BNewsletters#.xozr6YodZ.
- Unknown. "Believe. Imagine. Create." *Believe. Imagine. Create.*, 1 Jan. 1970, lifeontheflycounselor.blogspot.com/2014/06/believe-imagine-create.html.
- [Unknown]. "Dorm Life in Washburn Hall, San Jose State College, Early 1970s." *Calisphere*, San José State University, Special Collections and Archives, calisphere.org/item/ark:/13030/kt738nc7m3/.